

# MODERN LANGUAGE QUARTERLY

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December, 1954

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Edited by

**EDWARD GODFREY COX**

*Managing Editor*

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*Editorial Associate*

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*Direct Contributions and Business Correspondence to*

Managing Editor, Modern Language Quarterly

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Seattle 5

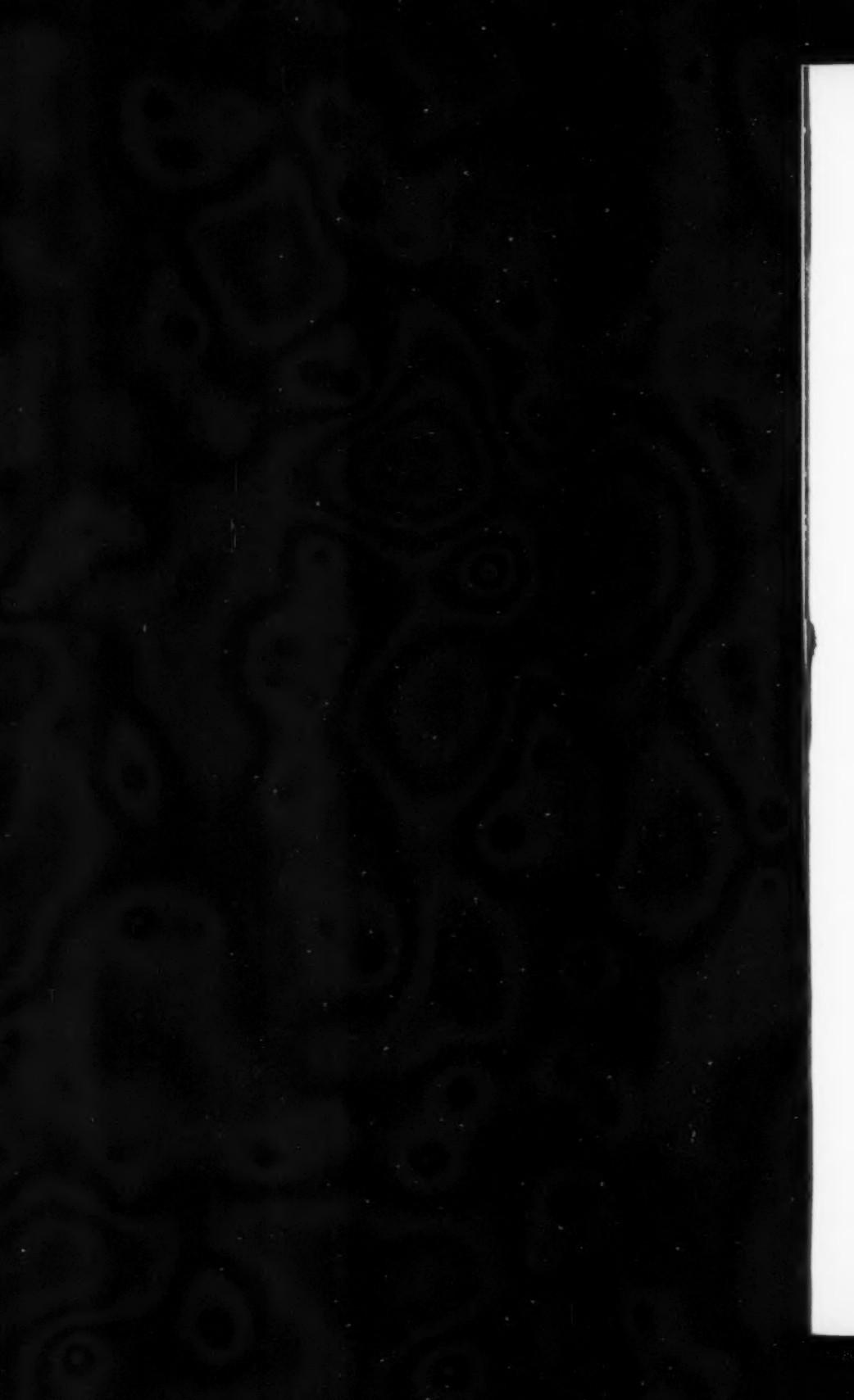
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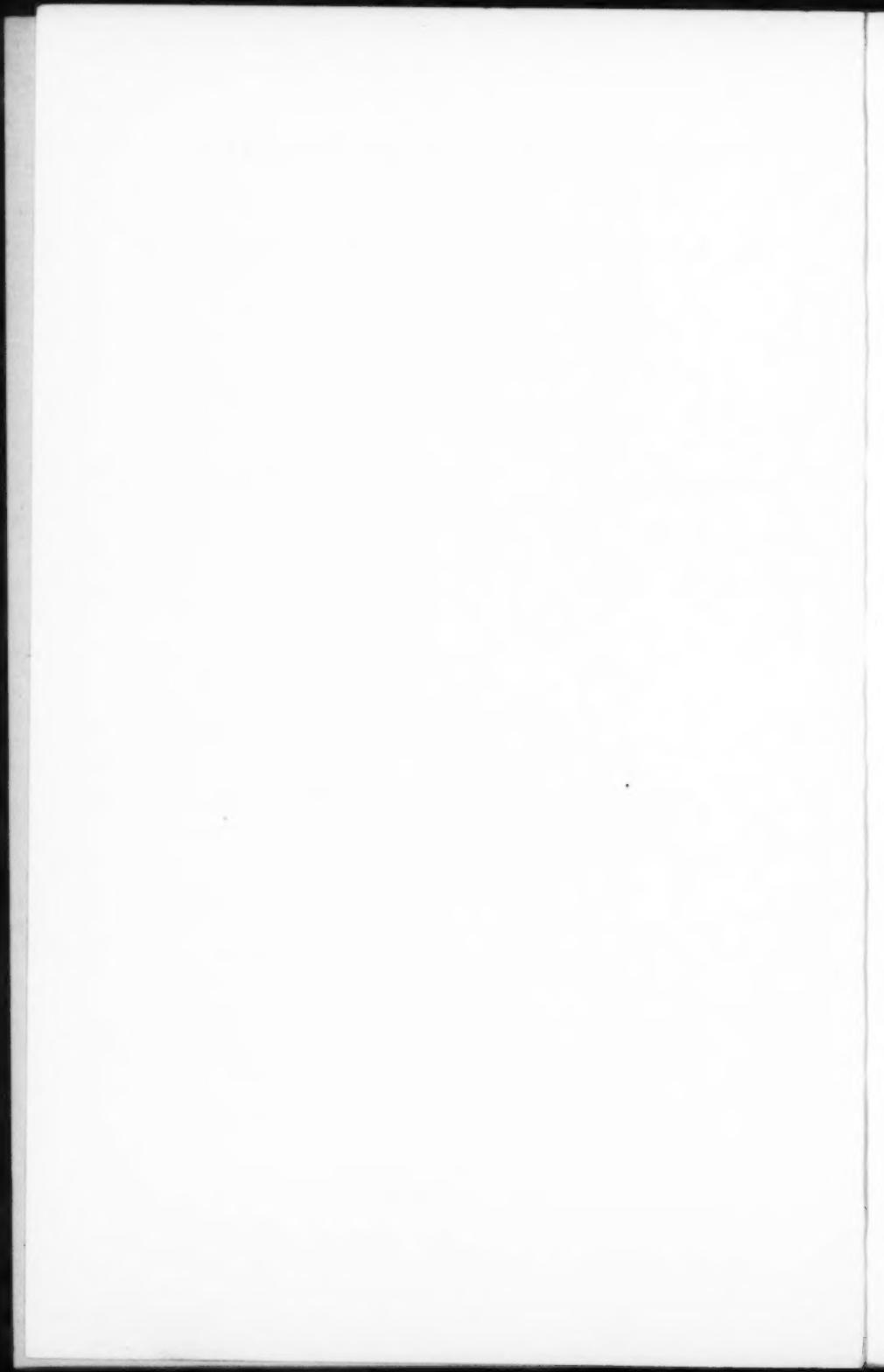
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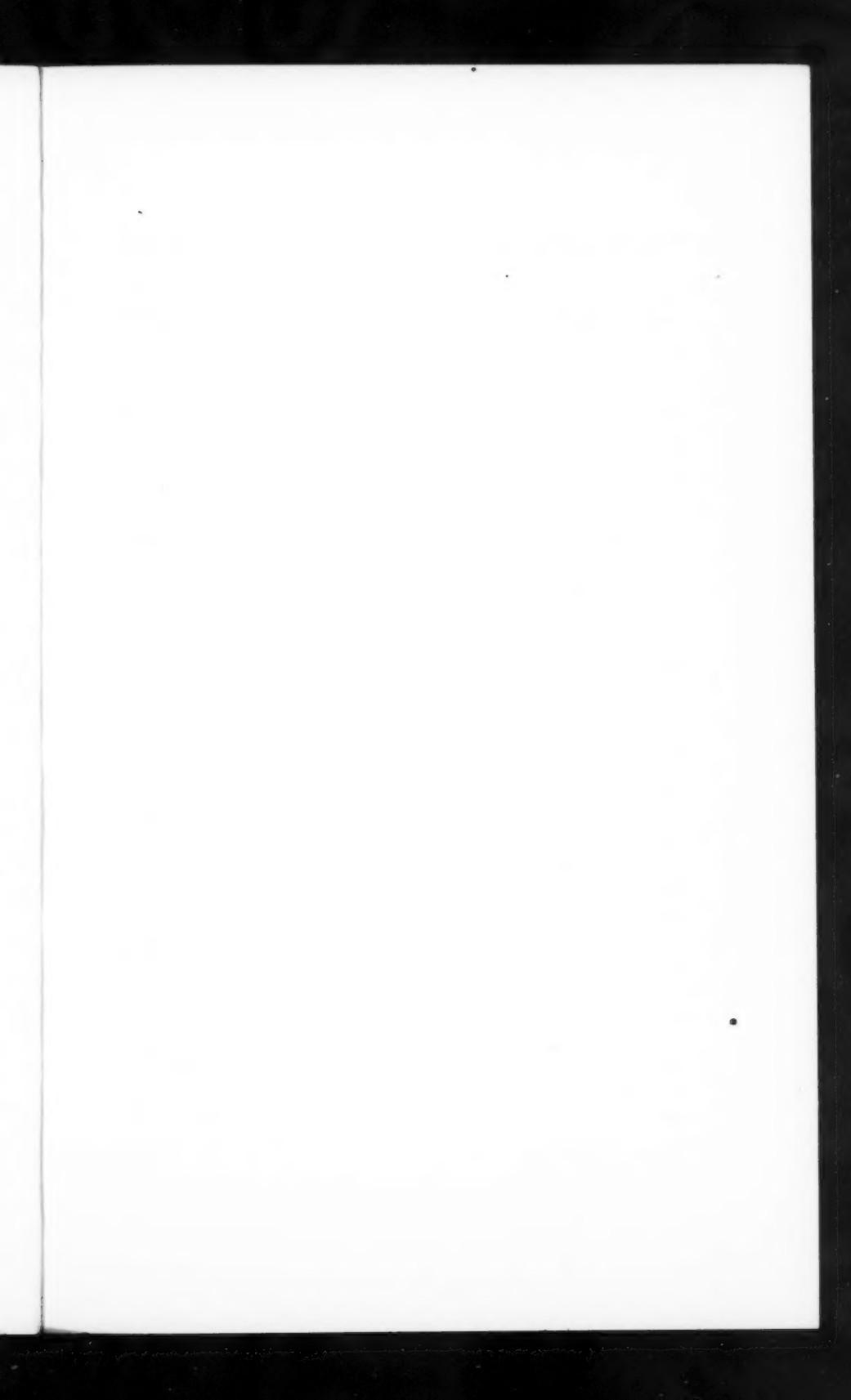
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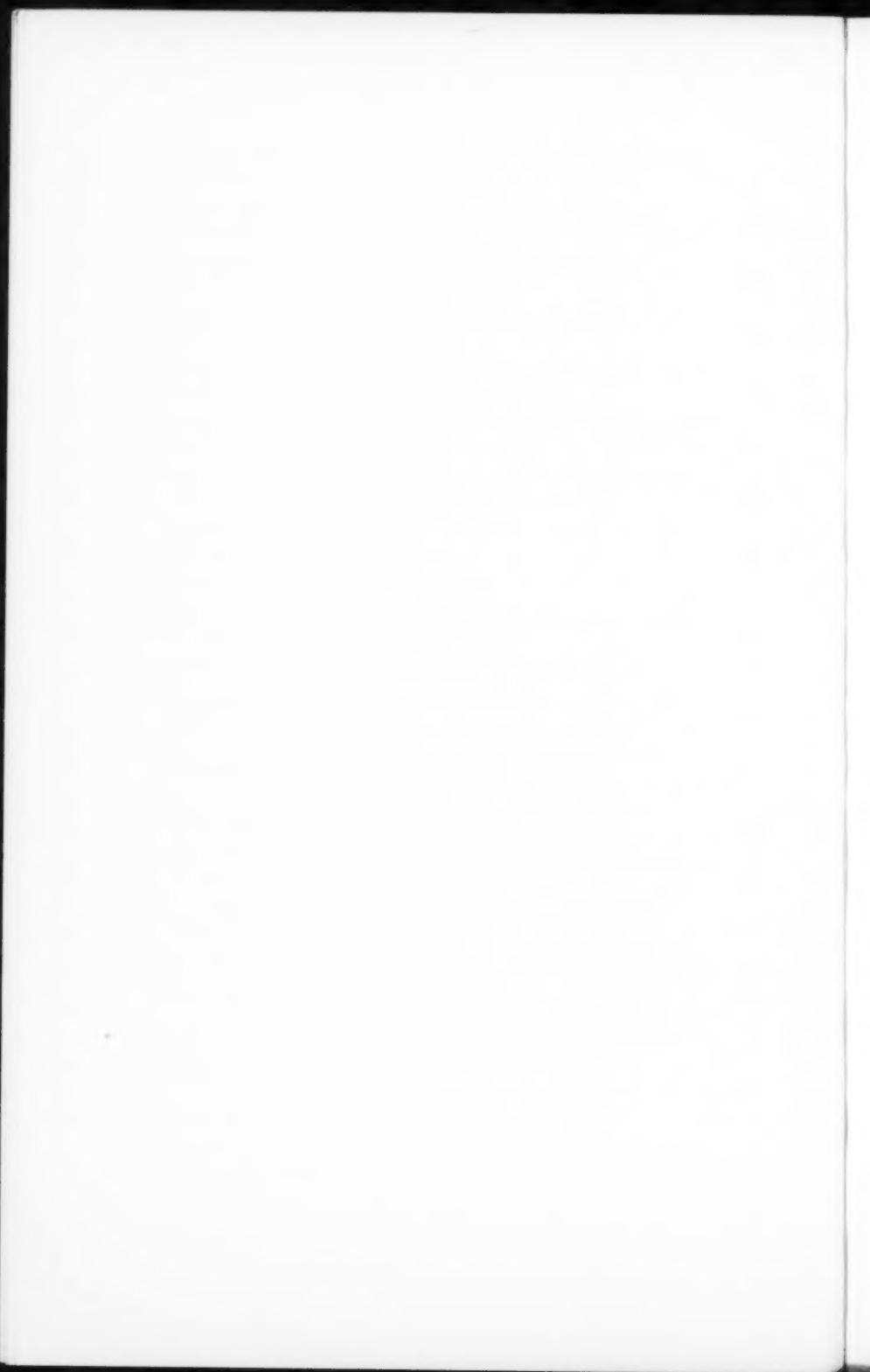
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## AN INTERPRETATION OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

By HERBERT DIECKMANN

Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*<sup>1</sup> deals with the main currents of thought in France, Germany, and England during one of the most complex, rich, and varied periods of modern history. His book is neither a survey nor a series of individual studies; it is a philosophic interpretation of the eighteenth century written from a personal viewpoint and applying a special methodology. The reviewer of this work is confronted with the task of discussing the author's philosophy, his approach, and his interpretation of the eighteenth century considered as a whole and in its individual writers. I regret to have been unable to solve many of the problems which such a discussion raises. The following lines do not present a complete review but a series of critical reflections.

The book appeared in its original German form some twenty years ago. Then it did not receive much attention from reviewers. When thumbing through the leading periodicals of that time, one is surprised to find so little mention of this fundamental study, which for the first time since H. Hettner's exemplary and still informative *Litteraturgeschichte des achzehnten Jahrhunderts; in drei Teilen* (1872) envisaged the eighteenth century as a European phenomenon which could be presented as a coherent though highly diversified picture. Paul Hazard's *La Crise de la conscience européenne* (1935) and even more his *La Pensée européenne au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1946) offer another attempt at a synthesis of the eighteenth century. When comparing Hazard's presentation with that of Cassirer, one cannot help regretting that the former took such scant notice of his eminent predecessor, who, as far as the study of European thought during that period is concerned, could have helped him to avoid several serious errors.

The Preface to Cassirer's work contains his methodological reflections: he intends to discuss eighteenth-century thought "in the light of the unity of its conceptual origin and of its underlying principle" (p. v) and, more specifically, as a transitory stage which can be fully understood only by an elucidation of its inner formative forces and in connection with preceding and subsequent developments. A presentation or even an analysis dealing predominantly with the *results* of that period in the domain of ideas would lose itself in contradictions, according to the author, and would lead to an "eclectic mixture of heterogeneous thought elements" (p. v). The characteristic feature of the Age of Enlightenment is that of a dramatic movement of ideas,

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951). Pp. 366.

which can be grasped only as a process and in action. Seventeenth-century thought found a systematic expression and objectified itself in definite forms. The analysis of the systems of Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke will disclose the various stages of its evolution. In the eighteenth century, on the contrary, the fixed forms of this thought are dissolved; thought again becomes a process in which there is doubting, seeking, tearing down, and building up (cf. p. ix). In the German edition the term "Auseinandersetzung" is used for this movement of thought; the translators circumscribe it in a rather general way. Cassirer takes the term in the sense of a dialectical discussion, which challenges issues and critically confronts established ideas. He uses the reflexive verb "sich auseinandersetzen" for his own method, indicating that he does not wish to present thought-contents but to discuss and confront intellectual forces, to take up their challenge, and to determine whence they spring and where they tend. The reader of Cassirer's work will soon realize that these principles do not merely form an eloquent program; they are carried out. Instead of setting forth or summarizing the opinions of the past, Cassirer thinks them through again; instead of confronting the reader with a series of intellectual facts, he enables him to understand the very movement of ideas in its various phases, conflicts, and solutions.

Another welcome feature of Cassirer's book is its positive character; the author, who has at his command a knowledge which comprises centuries of thought, strongly defends the Age of Enlightenment as one of the truly great philosophic centuries which lack neither spontaneity nor creativity. This positive evaluation, combined with the methods previously described, give to Cassirer's work a unity which distinguishes it favorably from Hazard's work on the eighteenth century. Hazard chooses several general topics and then describes in a predominantly literary and somewhat popularizing way what the authors of the eighteenth century thought about them. Their ideas are presented at the stage of widest diffusion and general validity; thus they have to undergo a process of considerable simplification. This method leads to what Cassirer would call a listing of only the results of the process of thought. To be sure, Hazard's work has outstanding literary merits; it is also more comprehensive, more detailed, and gives a more colorful view of the eighteenth century than Cassirer's study. However, it suffers from a fundamental dichotomy which Hazard attributed to the period itself and which in my opinion is the result of his method. He intended to present a synthesis of eighteenth-century thought, and since for reasons of literary elegance this synthesis had to have also the appeal of the "grand tableau," the author extracted some common elements from a great number of works which in reality expressed widely divergent ideas of individual thinkers in different countries. Such a process required a good deal of generalization; the result was that the rich texture of the period—the highly

complex pattern of causes and effects, the marvelous density of historic substance—was oversimplified and thinned out. Hazard seems to have been unaware of the effect of his generalization; he believed that he had determined the dominant character of the period. He could, however, not fail to notice that there remained a great number of elements which he had omitted and which did not fit into his scheme. Instead of attributing this discrepancy to his method of abstraction and to his artistic preoccupation, instead of realizing that his common denominator was wrong and that the broad meshes of his categories let slip through a vast number of problems, he formed out of the ideas which contradicted the "grand tableau" an independent whole. The entire second volume of his work, entitled *Désagrégation*, deals with those factors which in his opinion undermined eighteenth-century philosophy. In reality these factors contradict only his first volume or his method of abstraction.

This incongruity of method is characteristic of a number of studies of the Age of Enlightenment, and Hazard is not the only one who first asserts the existence of an eighteenth-century philosophy which can be unified in a coherent picture and then claims that some major thinkers or currents of that period refuted and overcame the eighteenth century. What eighteenth century? one is tempted to ask. Either there is a philosophy of the Age of Enlightenment and then the different currents of thought must find their place in that philosophy, or there is no such philosophy and we must limit ourselves to a series of monographs. Hume, Rousseau, or Kant can contradict Condillac, Diderot, or Voltaire, but they cannot contradict the philosophy of the eighteenth century since their works constitute this philosophy. Even Cassirer occasionally falls into this error despite his awareness of the danger of brilliant over-all statements; yet in general it can be said that philosophic currents which in Hazard's work are identified as contrary to the spirit of the eighteenth century and leading to its "désagrégation," appear in Cassirer in their true nature as ideas which are inherent in and constitute the very movement and life of the thought of the period. It is true that the eighteenth century is an age of great contrasts; already Dilthey has discussed this aspect. However, he also found that it is precisely the rare combination of the belief in the sovereignty of reason with the insight into the factors which oppose reason's autonomy (the contradictory and ambiguous character of life, the multiple meaning of events, and the fragmentary character of our existence) which constitutes the specific character of the eighteenth century. It is probably better to speak of a tension instead of a "combination," a tension which does not paralyze but which propels. The extraordinary mobility and playfulness of eighteenth-century thought, the wonderful blending of a keen sense of reality with an invincible love of ideas, stem from the acceptance of life's deep contradictions. I have made these comments because the conception of the Age of Enlighten-

ment seems to be in a similar state of crisis as that of the Renaissance; its coherence is threatened not only by those who oppose it, but also by those who defend it. Moreover, the eighteenth century is becoming more and more a prelude to Romanticism, and the main issue now seems to be as to who can add more instances of pre-Romanticism and push the date of its beginning further back in history.

Cassirer's first chapter, on the structure or form of thought in the Age of Enlightenment, serves a triple purpose: it is an introduction, an analysis of the historic factors which determined that age, and a brief sketch of the main themes of the entire book. Since the method which Galileo, Kepler, and Newton devised for the analysis of physical phenomena became in the eighteenth century not only the model for the investigation of nature, but also the paradigm of all rational analysis, Cassirer sets forth in detail the various characteristics of that method and its main implications. He contrasts it with the equally rational analysis of the seventeenth century, an analysis which was of a deductive and systematic character. His distinction between the concept of reason as formulated by Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, and Leibniz on the one side, and by the founders of the exact natural sciences, especially Newton, on the other, is a masterpiece of philosophic precision. After some excellent observations on the relation and contrast between philosophic and mathematical thought, Cassirer shows in which way the new "Denkform" was applied to various domains of knowledge.

One must be grateful to Cassirer for having stressed the significance of this tradition instead of following the conventional pattern in which Bayle, Saint-Evremond, Fontenelle, and in some cases Cyrano de Bergerac figure as the precursors of the Age of Enlightenment. One would, however, have welcomed a mention of the modifications which the method of the exact natural sciences underwent when it became a general criterion of accurate and objective knowledge. With the exception of a few scientists, the essence of this method (the reduction of the phenomena of nature to their quantitative relationships) was not understood. When Voltaire speaks of gravitation as a quality of matter, he is as remote from the scientific spirit of the period as Bacon was when he spoke of form. At times Cassirer also forgets the specific viewpoint which he adopted and speaks of the method of the exact natural sciences as the very mode and structure of thinking in the eighteenth century. One has only to think, as far as France is concerned, of Marivaux, Vauvenargues, Diderot, and Rousseau, in order to realize how misleading such a generalization is.

There also seems to be some confusion in this chapter as to the extent to which the eighteenth century was influenced by Descartes and his followers. Cassirer first establishes an antithesis between two traditions: Descartes-Malebranche-Spinoza and Kepler-Galileo-Newton. However, later this antithesis is to a great extent sacrificed, and

Descartes' analytical and rational method appears as the determining factor in eighteenth-century thought. Soon thereafter Leibniz emerges as the representative of a trend of thought which is opposed to the previous trends. Taken in itself, the brief outline of Leibniz' method is masterful. Still, the total effect of the picture of the various currents of thought is one of inconsistency; moreover, Cassirer contradicts his own principle according to which one cannot think of the eighteenth century in terms of philosophic systems. I wonder whether these inconsistencies are not the result of a conflict between Cassirer's Hegelianism, which pervades the entire book, and his historical accuracy. According to his Hegelianism the eighteenth century develops in a dialectical movement: a certain thinker, or a group of thinkers, is allowed to go only up to a certain point; then a counter-movement develops and out of it grows a new solution which in turn takes its place in a further process. One thinker does not differ from the other as an individual, but as a stage of a development, which is often conceived in terms of progressing consciousness and of the unfolding of the mind. There is no plurality of intellectual worlds, but either a contrast in view of a synthesis or a passage from a lower stage to the next higher. Often, for the sake of a striking antithesis the issues are oversimplified and a sharp contrast is established between various currents of thought which in reality express different individual views or intermediate and transitional phases. Occasionally Cassirer does some violence to chronology and to the curiously oscillating character of intellectual life, which rarely will follow a continuous line of evolution through well-ordered stages. Cassirer, like all historians who apply Hegel's method, comes into conflict with the course of events in actual time.

The second chapter, on "Nature and Natural Science," contains a brilliant analysis of the development of the concept of nature, of the relation between nature and the human mind, as well as of the many problems connected with the method used in scientific investigation. Although the principle of immanent causation and the severance of the link between theology and physics are essential features of eighteenth-century thought, it is not correct to state, as Cassirer does, that they were the *sine qua non* of the new edifice of physics. Many of those who contributed to this edifice kept alive their faith in the Christian religion. Often the results of natural science were used to support anti-religious thought which was anything but scientific. On the other hand, Cassirer shows well how the concepts or axioms of the uniformity of nature and the uniformity of experience lost more and more their objective metaphysical character and became pragmatic postulates. He might have added that the disintegration of the ideas of substance and causality led to the impasse of a positivistic phenomenalism.

His classification of La Mettrie with d'Holbach in a section on the popular philosophy of natural science seems to me erroneous as far as

La Mettrie is concerned. Fontenelle, Voltaire, Dom Deschamps, Morelly, and to a certain extent Diderot, ought to have appeared in this section. Gassendi's considerable role in the eighteenth century is nowhere discussed, a serious omission. Also the section dealing with the biological sciences and their methodology leaves much to be desired. Cassirer seems too much preoccupied with mathematical physics to realize fully the revolutionary change which took place in the eighteenth century when the processes of nature came to be understood as historical processes, when the notion of time and evolution, of individuality and of "Werden," were introduced into the concept of nature, destroying its previous timeless and logical character. These new ideas did not develop out of methodological reflections of Diderot and Buffon, but very concretely out of the analysis of certain chemical processes and processes of organic life. Maupertuis is one of those who were fully conscious of the impossibility of explaining these phenomena in terms of either Descartes' or Newton's mechanics. It was Maupertuis who set Diderot's mind in action and pushed it along the line of the new organological interpretation of nature, after Diderot had independently (in his *Lettre sur les aveugles*) overcome the deistic-mechanistic view of nature by his full realization of the significance of time and of inner form in the development of organisms.

The chapter on "Psychology and Epistemology" seems to me one of the best of Cassirer's book. He was excellently prepared for it by his monumental work on *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, from which he took some of the material and the method of interpretation for his third chapter. The reader who wishes to find a complete and detailed treatment of the problems will still have to consult the *Erkenntnisproblem*, particularly if, like the writer of these lines, he does not entirely agree with the choice Cassirer made for the present book. Still, the author shows excellently how the reflections on the foundation and justification of the method used in the investigation of nature led to a comprehensive and rapidly progressing inquiry into the nature of mind, an inquiry in which the psychological viewpoint gained in importance over the logical one. The "secularization" of the problem of knowledge, the introduction of the genetic method into the study of the mind, the new evaluation of the relation between subject and object in the process of knowledge, and above all, the emphasis on the role of the forces of emotion, instinct, and volition (Locke's "uneasiness," Condillac's "inquiétude," Leibniz' "percepturitio," the function of the "lower faculties" in Hume's treatise) in the activity of the mind, as well as the pragmatic viewpoint in epistemology, appear as the central problems of the Age of Enlightenment.

The grouping of several epistemological themes around a common center, the theory of vision as formulated by Molyneux, seems to me an excellent method. Descartes' *Dioptrique* might have offered an even

better starting point. Cassirer's analysis of the development of the theory of knowledge in Germany deserves special attention, for this aspect is often neglected. I regret that he excluded from his chapter Thomas Reid's criticism of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, for besides its intrinsic philosophic significance and its important historical connection with seventeenth-century English deism, it is in many instances related to problems discussed by Leibniz' German followers and bears a surprising resemblance to Husserl's phenomenological studies.

Two more corrections seem necessary: the linking of epistemology, psychology, and aesthetics in the eighteenth century is not, as Cassirer maintains, a specifically German phenomenon; it occurs also in France and England. A study of such concepts as genius, imagination, and artistic creativity would show this link very clearly. The second correction concerns the role of Kant in *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Throughout the entire book one notices a curious combination of Hegelianism and the neo-Kantianism of the Marburg School, which is one of Cassirer's strongest intellectual heritages. In every chapter, and particularly in the present one, the reader can observe that the various authors and movements of eighteenth-century thought are arranged and interpreted in such a fashion as to form a slow progression toward the epitome and climax: the philosophy of Kant, as the Marburg School understood him. This perspective is odd enough, but the reader wonders also why no section of the book is devoted to Kant. The answer is, I think, partly a philosophical one: since Kant is in true Hegelian fashion at the same time the climax of a preceding and the beginning of a new development, his place is at the beginning of the unfolding of the mind in the nineteenth century.

One of the most frequent misunderstandings in the interpretation of the eighteenth century concerns its attitude toward religion. Hazard sees in the hostility to Christian faith the common denominator of the multiple currents of that period. There is undoubtedly some truth in this generalization, and it is quite valid for such authors as Morelly or d'Holbach; but when it is extended to religion and faith in themselves, it leads to a complete misrepresentation of eighteenth-century thought, a thought which, far from simply opposing the Church, is deeply engaged in a serious and passionate inner struggle with religion and receives many of its problems and even its very methods of thinking from the religious tradition. The Age of Enlightenment, or, to be concrete, some of its representatives, penetrated to the problem of religion and faith itself and sought either new forms of religion or an acceptable modification of existing creeds. There is a deep polarity of disbelief and belief in the eighteenth century, a polarity which has to be understood as a dialectic movement. Seen from this point of view, which is opposed to the abstract concept of an Age of Reason, the eighteenth century is a period in which few ideas were as much alive and important as that of religion. (I am not even mentioning religious thought

proper, which was very much alive in the eighteenth century, as Henri Bremond has shown in his *magnum opus*.)

Cassirer's analysis of the central questions around which the religious and anti-religious controversies evolved (the dogma of original sin, theodicy, the anti-metaphysical justification of being and of man's existence, tolerance, and natural religion) corrects many misinterpretations of the Age of Enlightenment. Particularly valuable is Cassirer's method of tracing the development of each of his great themes from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century and of showing the changes ideas underwent in this process. He could rely here on the monumental work by E. Troeltsch : *Renaissance und Reformation* and *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die moderne Welt*. For the specifically German development he relied on Auer's excellent *Die Theologie der Lessingzeit*. He also utilized, of course, Leslie Stephen's brilliant *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, but quite often he presents his own interpretation of the relevant texts. His analysis of Hume's destruction of the foundation of natural religion seems to me methodologically clearer and more to the point than Stephen's much more detailed account. Toward the end of this chapter, as a transition to the next one, Cassirer claims that historical thinking developed in the eighteenth century in the domain of religion and that a new content was given to religion (in addition to that of the religion of feeling) by the discovery and acknowledgment of its historical character.

It seems to me that Cassirer has touched in this chapter on a number of highly controversial issues. If, as he maintains, Lessing's idea of true religion as the totality of all the historical manifestations of the religious spirit is the clearest example of the introduction of the spirit of history into the domain of reason, then this achievement can hardly be attributed to the Age of Enlightenment, but must be traced back to the currents of syncretism during the Renaissance, currents which found an eloquent expression in Pico della Mirandola. It is also erroneous to state that Spinoza's theologico-political treatise exerted no influence on the eighteenth century. On the contrary, this treatise is the only work that exerted a broad and direct influence on the early eighteenth century, particularly on the clandestine philosophic movement which in its turn formed the ideas of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau. On the other hand, it seems to me that Cassirer considerably overrates Spinoza's role as a founder of the principle of the historicity of the Bible. The true source of this principle is to be found in Erasmus' theological humanism and in his Protestant followers, who out of their concern for the pure Christian doctrine critically examined the Scriptures for possible later additions. The motives which led the Jesuits and Richard Simon to their examination of the authenticity of the Bible seem to me neither inspired by Descartes' new method nor by a sense of historicity; they are the result of

the Catholic apologetics which fought the Protestants' exclusive reliance on the Bible as the only authority in religious matters. If Spinoza introduced historical thought into the eighteenth century, an affirmation which I find unconvincing, it must have been very much against his intention, for he attacks the Scriptures in the name of truth, and truth, in his definition, is purely rational, i.e., beyond space and time. Consequently, truth cannot manifest itself in a historical document which has all the characteristics of the imperfection of temporality and all the limitations of individual authorship. In my opinion it would be easy to show that the a-historical and anti-historical currents of the clandestine philosophic movement can often be traced back to Spinoza. All these problems require a much more careful analysis; they concern the most important issues of eighteenth-century thought.

One also wonders why Cassirer, despite his interest in historical thinking, is himself so little concerned with history; not only is his work full of chronological errors, but he also avoids all reference to historical events. What he actually gives to his readers is a topology of conceptual patterns. I do not intend to underestimate the importance of such a topology or its benefits in terms of clarity and logical coherence, but I cannot see how the questions of tolerance or natural religion can be dissociated from the concrete historic events out of which they grew and which, in turn, they determined. One of the shortcomings of the history of ideas is that ideas become indeed quite clear, but lose all life and meaning.

In the chapter on "The Conquest of the Historical World," Cassirer shows how the problem of history, which, according to him, arose in the field of religion, extended to other domains and became a conscious problem in various philosophers of the Enlightenment. The author takes up here one of Dilthey's main ideas, for it was in Dilthey's article on "Das achzehnte Jahrhundert und die geschichtliche Welt" (1901) that the thesis of the unhistoric or even a-historic eighteenth century was first refuted by a detailed argumentation. Cassirer uses Dilthey's article as a starting point, but soon follows an independent line of reasoning and demonstration. In his opinion, it was Romanticism which started and spread the still-existing legend of the unhistoric Age of Enlightenment, an obvious error according to Cassirer, which also concealed the fact that the historicism of the nineteenth century grew out of that of the eighteenth century in a steady development.

The chapter contains a number of excellent discussions on the role of Leibniz, Bayle, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, and above all, Herder, as founders of historical thinking; but it also raises some questions as to the validity of Cassirer's perspective. First of all, he is much more concerned with the development of historical logic and its epistemological implications than with that of historical method and historical thinking. In this connection one wonders whether there was not in Cassirer's mind a certain confusion between historical and anti-

rational or anti-metaphysical thinking. To accept only immanent and reject supernatural causation, to admit truth in the domain of facts and reject Descartes', Spinoza's, and Malebranche's purely rational and metaphysical concept of truth, is in itself not a sign of historic sense; it is simply characteristic of empiricism and immanentism. Nor is it, in my opinion, correct to say or to surmise that belief in supernatural causation is a sign of unhistoric thinking. Bossuet, who gave a metaphysical superstructure to historical causation, may, in as far as this superstructure is concerned, be called a metaphysical historian; but even in his metaphysical views (not to mention his concern for empirical causation) Bossuet is a historian. All Cassirer should have said is that, in so far as the motivation of events is concerned, some eighteenth-century historians use rational and psychological arguments and refuse to go beyond the given data of events. One must also add that this conception of immanent historical causation by no means originated in the eighteenth century, as Cassirer suggests, but, as far as modern times are concerned, in Machiavelli's and Guicciardini's political historiography as well as in the humanistic and Protestant philology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Bayle comes out of this latter tradition and is to a much greater extent a disciple of protestant theology and philology than those who see him as a precursor of the eighteenth century are willing to admit. The religious origins of Bayle's thought have been much obscured and distorted by apostles of the Age of Enlightenment. I may also add that the perspective in which eighteenth-century historical thought is presented must not only be corrected with regard to the past, but also with regard to the future; Cassirer plays the "conquest of the historical world" into the perspective of the romantic conception of history. However, in that conception the strict empiricism and the rationalism of the eighteenth century are rejected!

The section on Bayle contains many brilliant observations on his role as a logician of history. Cassirer uses in his interpretation the method of contrasting two ways of thinking; in the present case, those of Bayle and Bossuet. This method permits a pointed and striking contrast, but it also involves the risk of sacrificing the complex nature of ideas to the sharp contrasts of a dialectical scheme. Bossuet serves merely the purpose of forming a negative background for Bayle, and in the case of the latter Cassirer often substitutes nineteenth-century categories and methods for the actual psychological and historic reasons that motivated Bayle's thought. He also fails to mention that there is in Bayle a deep pessimism concerning history, a pessimism which weighs heavily and makes him despair about the endless accumulation of nonsense, deceit, fraud, stupidity, intolerance, and gross ignorance, which constituted the past and continues into the present. This historical pessimism is very characteristic of the entire Age of Enlightenment; it is, moreover, one of the main sources of the idea of

progress, a progress which would be obtained by drastic reform and total change, by a deliberate break with the past and an energetic rejection of tradition. The past and tradition are felt as a dead weight and an impediment. Cassirer shows nowhere how this pessimism modified the historical thinking of the eighteenth century.

In his interpretation of Montesquieu, Cassirer fails to mention the large section in the *Esprit des Lois* (nearly a fourth of the work) on the Franco-Germanic and Gallo-Roman origins and traditions in French laws and customs. An analysis of this section would have permitted Cassirer to show the actual application of historical method. In the case of Voltaire, Cassirer's emphasis on the logic of historical method leads to several errors, for there are great inconsistencies in Voltaire's theories on history. Cassirer develops the idea that Voltaire conceived of a universal process of history as a growth and development of consciousness. D'Alembert is said to have carried out this idea in his *Discours Préliminaire*, which unfolds the "methodological self-development of the idea of knowledge itself." Here Cassirer's terminology comes too close to that of the nineteenth century and to Hegel; he correctly perceives in the Age of Enlightenment the beginning of the conception of historical progress in terms of a gradual self-affirmation of reason, but he immediately distorts this perception by stating it in categories of a later period and by passing in silence or by underplaying Voltaire's and D'Alembert's unhistorical rejection of entire centuries, their essentially psychological and moralistic conception of the forces that determine human events, and their metaphysical conception of the goal and finality of history, a conception which is as transcendent as that of Bossuet. Cassirer's preoccupation with principles and methods prevents him from realizing that Voltaire's great merits as a historian are not in the domain of logic, but in that of art and literature. He mentions much too briefly the literary qualities of Voltaire's historiography. One must add to these Voltaire's keen sensitivity to and clear perception of cultural values in history, his understanding of the significance of taste, style, art, social life, and social forms in history, his very influential concept of certain cultures as indestructible creative units within the historical process. The principles of D'Alembert which Cassirer summarizes in order to show that the great mathematician laid the foundation of the modern history of science hardly are historical; they are psychological, logical, or moral and carry on the humanistic tradition.

There is little or nothing in Cassirer on Diderot's very important contributions to historical thinking. Cassirer only discusses the conventional articles of the *Encyclopédie* on the history of philosophy. In Hume's case, he shows clearly the effect of the destruction of the idea of substance on historiography, but fails to discuss Hume's important concept of the dark, irrational forces in history. Herder's great contribution to historical thinking is explained partly by the fact that he

discovered in Leibniz the categories and methods of thinking which were required for such a task. It was the final unearthing of the "methodological treasure which lay hidden in Leibniz's doctrine" which permitted Herder to categorize his historic sense, that is to develop it in clear and adequate concepts. The idea of a philosopher having established in the past a new conception of certain fundamental categories of the mind, a conception which lies hidden for almost a century before it receives its full realization by another thinker, such an idea has an undeniable fascination; but I confess that Cassirer does not entirely convince me. I wonder also why it is that Leibniz' conception of phenomena preformed in the nature of substance led in the biology of the eighteenth century to the most unhistorical conceptions. The followers of Descartes and Leibniz are in the field of biology the greatest impediments to the formation of the idea of evolution and of epigenesis. We find no mention in the present chapter of the role of history in the literature, the philosophy, and the various sciences of the eighteenth century, domains in which the historical sense played a very significant role.

In his chapter on "Law, State and Society," Cassirer observes rightly that the anti-traditional and revolutionary character of the ideas of the "philosophes" on political and juridical issues is often so much emphasized that the constructive effort of the Age of Enlightenment in rebuilding society, and the part which tradition had in this work of reconstruction, are overlooked. In the discussion of law, its origin and foundation, of the relation between right and might, and particularly in the discussions of the independence of natural law from religious dogma as well as from the omnipotence of the state, one can observe everywhere the return to the fundamental conceptions of humanism and, through it, of classical antiquity. Such conceptions are the ancient rights of reason, the ideality and reality of law, the connection between legal, mathematical, and epistemological problems. Cassirer establishes the logical and categorical pattern in which these questions were raised, a pattern which determined the very terminology of the eighteenth century. Particularly interesting is Cassirer's demonstration of the link between the method of analysis used in the domain of law and that used in natural sciences, as well as the relationship of the question of freedom, predestination, or determination with that of law from the time of Grotius on into the eighteenth century. The student of the Age of Enlightenment will greatly profit from Cassirer's exemplary analysis of the inter-relation between all these ideas. The author is right that the traditional aprioristic conception of natural law and ethics is still accepted by the most representative "philosophes." In several instances Cassirer might have pointed out that a considerable drift of meaning took place in the eighteenth century with regard to the concepts he discusses, a drift toward utilitarian, pragmatic, and essentially anti-metaphysical values. Voltaire's ethics,

for instance, are in my opinion aprioristic and rational in appearance only. When the first laws of society are likened to animal instincts, when the cause of the preservation of human society is made subservient to "needs," when the immutability of our moral nature is identified with the uniformity of inclinations, instincts, and appetites, then the term aprioristic becomes a misnomer. It was Voltaire who transformed the metaphysical problem of liberty into a practical and political problem and considerably modified the idea of the inalienable rights of man by identifying them with the right of expressing one's ideas and the right of property and personal safety. Already in Bayle, one can observe that the ideal foundation of law and of ethical principles is destroyed because they are judged by their effectiveness in a given situation. Cassirer fails to mention the considerable role which actual historic factors and the currents of "sensibilité," enthusiasm, and emotionalism (about such topics as man's good nature, the voice of the heart, the inborn righteousness of the underprivileged, etc.) played in the preparation of the content and revolutionary impact of these rights.

The section on "The Contract and the Method of the Social Sciences" suffers somewhat from Cassirer's preoccupation with logical and epistemological issues; according to him the new method of social sciences is directly connected with the new form of logic, that is the logic of invention, the theory of genetic definition. Cassirer seems even to believe that the method of social sciences grew out of this new logic: Hobbes's political radicalism is said to spring from his logical radicalism. Here Cassirer's epistemological approach falsifies the historic perspective, for though it is certain that Hobbes applied or believed he applied Galileo's constructive method to the science of the state, and though he treated political phenomena as if they were geometrical and physical problems, the motives which directed his way of thinking were not of an epistemological nature, but sprang from Hobbes's hard positivistic mind and his will for power, order, and cogency. It is this will and not a problem of method which is also behind the reduction of the phenomena of the outer world to quantitative relationships. However, these instances of a methodological bias are more than compensated for by Cassirer's excellent analysis of Hugo Grotius and above all by his brilliant presentation of Rousseau which by many years preceded the recent revisions made in traditional Rousseau criticism. The present section is a summary of a long article entitled "Das Problem Jean Jacques Rousseau" (1932), which gained little attention from eighteenth-century scholars, though Cassirer had condensed it in a speech before the Société Française de Philosophie (February 27, 1932); the address was published in the bulletin of that society in the same year. Only recently the main points of Cassirer's article were discussed in detail by Robert Derathé in his remarkable work *Le Rationalisme de Jean Jacques Rousseau* (1948). I am in full agreement with Derathé's judgment that Cassirer occasionally interprets

Rousseau too much along neo-Kantian lines and overstresses the linear rational character of Rousseau's ideas. However, this objection does not diminish the great merits of the above-mentioned article and its summary in the present book. Cassirer's purely philosophical analysis of Rousseau is a welcome relief from the vast amount of amateurish psychological treatment of Rousseau's ideas. His discussion of the relation between the concepts of law, of the state, and of general will, as well as his analysis of the contrast between the Encyclopedists' conception of reform (which is to be accomplished within the framework of the given historical society and culture) and that of Rousseau (which is to take place in a society and culture reformed in its very principles and foundation), belongs to the best interpretations of Rousseau scholarship.

Instead of "Fundamental Problems of Aesthetics," the last chapter might be called more adequately "History of the Growth of Systematic Aesthetics," for Cassirer is primarily interested in aesthetics as a province of systematic philosophy. He concentrates his interest on those currents which led to a unification and systematization of aesthetic reflections. The choice of authors and works, the emphasis given to certain ideas, the methods applied, all is directed by this predominating interest. Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* is the goal toward which the spirit of the eighteenth century moves, and all the various schools of thought that precede it are preliminary stages. We cannot go into many details here; a few comments may suffice. The large section devoted to seventeenth-century aesthetics seems to be out of proportion to the rest of the chapter; the identification of classical aesthetics with Cartesianism will seem to many readers like a short circuit. Cassirer does not give evidence of knowing Lanson's famous article on the issue, nor is he aware of the many studies on the classical doctrine which have appeared since then. Little attention is given to the specifically literary aspects of that doctrine. The transition from seventeenth-century to eighteenth-century aesthetics is, alas, explained in terms of that from Cartesianism to Newtonianism. In the subsequent analysis of the trends toward subjectivism and of the alliance between psychology, epistemology, and aesthetics in the eighteenth century, Cassirer shows again his philosophic acumen and high competence. Père Bouhours, however, seems in Cassirer's presentation less a concrete, historic person than a stage in a process. I do not think that this metamorphosis does justice to the work of the Jesuit Father. Shaftesbury, who, according to Cassirer, finally transcended the preceding rationalism and empiricism in aesthetics, is seen in the light of Herder, Schiller, and Goethe. It would be easy to quote a number of passages from the *Characteristics* which contradict Cassirer's interpretation. As there is a German Shakespeare, there is also a German Shaftesbury. The pages given to Burke illustrate in such a striking fashion the advantages and shortcomings of Cassirer's method, that a

brief comment, which is valid also for other sections of the book, seems appropriate. Burke's ideas are discussed with the usual skill and brilliance; Cassirer's mastery of comparing, contrasting, delineating, and differentiating concepts carries the reader with ease through long philosophic discussions. However, his lack of concern for the individuality of the author he discusses and the origin which ideas have in the life, the cultural milieu, the personal disposition, as well as the intellectual temper and emotional nature of a thinker, is bewildering and at times uncanny. One gathers the impression that certain minds, identifiable by names, thought a number of concepts which for reasons known only to some *Weltgeist* constitute during a given period a development with clearly divided stages. It never seems to occur to Cassirer that our judgments on what is aesthetically pleasing or displeasing, on what causes delight or pain, on what appeals to our taste or revolts it, have something to do with our personal evaluation of pleasure or pain, our personal preference of agitation and movement, or calm and tranquillity, of either excitement or peacefulness. Particularly in Burke's case, it is strikingly evident that his dominant interest lies in the analysis of the individual psychological factors which enter and determine our aesthetic judgments, and this interest is a highly personal matter with Burke. This makes it no less valid. His conception of the sublime and his criticism of the identification of beauty with harmony, calm, order, containment, and proportionateness are indissolubly connected with his sense of pain, of the destruction of self, and of death. There is no sign in Cassirer that these factors are of any significance; only concepts seem to exist.

The pages on Gottsched and the Swiss aestheticians, who seem to me as dull as they were healthy, lead to the last section entitled "The Foundation of Systematic Aesthetics: Baumgarten." Cassirer states that in Germany for the first time "the entire field of aesthetics is placed under the guidance and as it were tutorship of systematic philosophy" (my translation; cf. pp. 331-32), and he does not conceal his deep admiration for this achievement; it fits well his underlying assumption that Kant's philosophy is the fulfillment of the eighteenth century. This perspective explains the fact that he devotes twenty-one pages to Baumgarten and, when he comes to Lessing, does little more than extol him as the author who expressed Baumgarten's ideas in an artful persuasive style. From a point of view less concerned with systematic treatment, one might object that Cassirer distorts here, as in his entire chapter, the proportions of eighteenth-century thought as a whole and pushes his systematic propensity too far. Diderot's ideas on the theater, for instance, are dismissed in one line, because they are too aphoristic and lack coherence; no mention whatever is made of Diderot's *Salons*. Many essential documents of a strictly literary nature are left out, as, to name but a few, Marmontel's critical writings, articles in periodicals or in the *Encyclopédie*, the all-important

prefaces to tragedies, comedies, and dramas. Art criticism (one cannot discuss the concept of genius in the eighteenth century without mentioning Falconet's ideas on the subject) and the famous quarrels on music do not even receive a passing remark. These omissions are serious enough when taken in themselves; but they become even more grave since Cassirer establishes a line of development of aesthetics in the eighteenth century and assigns to historic documents the role of stages in a dialectic development. Since certain changes in taste and aesthetic sensitivity occurred several decades before Cassirer traced them in the ideas of an author, the phenomenology of the mind is thrown into wild disorder. These reservations, however, must not make us forget that Cassirer wrote a brilliant chapter on philosophic aesthetics in the eighteenth century and called to the attention of literary historians the necessity of studying more closely the philosophic ideas both in themselves and in connection with ideas from other domains of knowledge.

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The translators Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove had to solve a difficult problem. Cassirer's language is often quite abstract; moreover, German philosophic terminology has definite connotations and evolves in a certain frame of reference; both have no exact equivalent in English. To a foreign ear some of Cassirer's sentences will sound vague and diffuse, not because they have that fault, but because English does not provide the philosophic tradition and the conceptual context which Cassirer could take for granted in German. Add to this that Cassirer often uses the method of paraphrasing the ideas of others; since he paraphrases them in philosophic terms, he gives the impression of a philosophic analysis, but this is only an appearance. His philosophic paraphrase is in itself a transposition into another language and difficult to render. On the whole the translators solved their difficulties well; their text is very readable. Their translation often had to be a philosophic interpretation. In some instances I am not sure that they had to simplify the original so drastically: "Die Denkform des Zeitalters der Aufklärung" is much more definite and clear than "The Mind of the Enlightenment." "Natur und Naturerkenntnis im Zeitalter der Aufklärung" is an articulate chapter heading which is not even summarized by "Nature and Natural Science." There are several instances of this undue simplification. There are also several serious errors in the translation, and the student of Cassirer who wishes to know the exact meaning will do well to consult the original from time to time. I can give here only a few examples: "Für Berkeley, Hume und Condillac ist der Begriff ein blösser Niederschlag von Impressionen": "Berkeley, Hume and Condillac consider a concept merely as a shower of impressions"; "Hier bestand die Aufgabe

vor allem in der Auflösterung eines religiösen Systems": "The task of German deism lay in perfecting a religious system"; "gewordenes, historisches Recht": "conventional historic law"; "der anschauliche Charakter alles eigentlich Poetischen": "the intuitive character of everything genuinely poetic"; "denn indem sie in dieser Weise in die theoretische Sphäre eindringt, um sie sich zu unterwerfen, unterliegt sie wieder der Vermischung mit ihr": "for in entering the theoretical sphere in this manner and in being subordinated to it, the imagination is subject to incorporation with theory." In all these cases the meaning of the original is distorted.

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## IN DEFENSE OF CRISEYDE

By CONSTANCE SAINTONGE

After Chaucer has told of Criseyde's capitulation to Troilus and the joys of love, he makes, in the form of exhortation, a significant general comment:

For love of God, take every woman heed  
To werken thus, if it comth to the neede.  
*(Troilus and Criseyde, III, 1224-25)*<sup>1</sup>

Recorded here are not only his approval of complete surrender in true love, but also his enthusiasm for Criseyde's behavior at a high moment of the poem—at possibly the highest moment, since the love scenes yield a more concentrated pleasure than the pathetic incidents of the last two books.

Certainly Chaucer deplored Criseyde's infidelity. The breaking of her troth is so grievous a crime that he seems hardly able to speak of it: "the storie telleth us" (V, 1037), he says guardedly; "Men seyn—I not—" (V, 1050). And yet his withdrawal from the story at this point in Book V may signify his love for Criseyde as well as his disillusionment, for it must be noted that throughout four books of the poem he has presented us with a Criseyde who is not only bewitching but admirable as a woman. Even in her betrayal she embodies the traits which men have traditionally desired in women: she is soft, amorous, sweet, timorous, and mysterious.

But Criseyde's unfaithfulness and the search for one all-sufficient explanation of it seem to have been more productive of critical comment than the unbiased contemplation of her charms. Edgar Finley Shannon arrives at the conclusion that Ovid's Helen was the prototype of Chaucer's lady, and describes Criseyde from this angle: she is quite aware of her lover's intentions from the start; she is disingenuous, coy, fearful, and faithless,<sup>2</sup> a list that one cannot accept unreservedly, and one which obliterates all her individual traits. This is an extreme opinion, however, and it must be admitted that she has received tribute as a woman and as an individual. C. S. Lewis, in *Allegory of Love*, gives a just portrait, recognizing Chaucer's tenderness for Criseyde, and the sincerity and virtue which lie behind her actions in the opening books of the poem. His principal aim, however, seems to be the explanation of infidelity in a lady otherwise so satisfactory, and his conviction that one ruling passion, fear, dominates her actions and compels her always to seek protection<sup>3</sup> tends to blur

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston, 1933). All quotations from Chaucer are taken from this edition.

<sup>2</sup> Edgar Finley Shannon, *Chaucer and the Roman Poets* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), pp. 160-68.

<sup>3</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Allegory of Love* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 182-90.

the attractions which he has just conceded her. Certainly Nevill Coghill is sensitive to the delicacies and mysteries that Chaucer gives her. He speaks of her "reticences and reluctances" and of the persistence to the end of the poem of her enigmatic quality.<sup>4</sup> But there is, as always, her unfaithfulness; and Mr. Coghill's conclusion is that the poem, if it is read on the personal level,<sup>5</sup> "seems a compassionate study of the faint-hearted fickleness of a girl, or perhaps of girls in general."<sup>6</sup>

Of course, one cannot ignore her fearfulness unless one ignores Chaucer, and one is forced by the poem to speculate upon her faithlessness. But the infidelity, apparently, has blotted out for her critics all that has gone before. It is, it appears, our moral duty to shut our eyes to her allurements, since in the end she is so weak. "Criseyde is charming but she is unfaithful"—the *but* rushes in too soon. Surely Chaucer intended his readers to take more pleasure in her charm. Pleasure and perhaps something more: another perception of Chaucer's feeling about the difficulties of human life; for if one forswears or at least postpones condemnation, one is struck by the notion that the same qualities which made her desirable brought about her fall from grace.

Mr. Lewis, in another essay, claims a "medievalization" to be the principal means by which Chaucer transformed Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*.<sup>7</sup> Not the intrigues of *Il Filostrato* but the attitudes of the courtly love code as they are prescribed by such writers as Andreas Capellanus rule the behavior of Troilus and Criseyde. Now it seems a far cry from Andreas' formulas for the medieval lady's demeanor to Chaucer's picture of Criseyde. In Andreas' sample dialogue between a man and a woman of the higher nobility, the tone seems dogmatic and didactic. The woman's function is to hold the man firmly up to an ideal of conduct: she checks excesses in his discourse; she catechises him on the subject of love and is quick to trap him in contradictions and fallacies; it appears that only after a great deal of

<sup>4</sup> Nevill Coghill, *The Poet Chaucer* (London, 1949), pp. 73 and 74.

<sup>5</sup> It must be said that this is not Mr. Coghill's first choice of interpretation. He mentions two possible planes on which one may read the poem: the personal one described above, and a second which he prefers and on which he finds the concern of the poem to be "the falseness of courtly love itself" (p. 67). This last interpretation is beyond the purposes of this paper, which deals primarily with Criseyde as an individual. D. W. Robertson, Jr., in "Chaucerian Tragedy," *ELH*, XIX (1952), 11-37, also generalizes the meaning of *Troilus and Criseyde*, interpreting it as a version of the "fall of man" theme, and Criseyde as an embodiment of sensual delight. Robertson's article is of interest in the present study only in that it goes further in divesting Criseyde of individual traits and describes her more unsympathetically than any of the comments mentioned above.

<sup>6</sup> Coghill, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> C. S. Lewis, "What Chaucer Really Did to *Il Filostrato*," *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, XVII (1932), 56-75. For a later discussion of this view, see *Chaucer the Maker* (London, 1951), pp. 51-53, by John Speirs, who feels that Mr. Lewis has oversimplified the interpretation of the poem by this generalization.

persuasion and lofty talk will she deign to give him hope.<sup>8</sup> He is her humble servant and she the inspired guide to taste and noble bearing. Set down thus, the requirements make her seem priggish and sharp-tongued. But under them all lies the emphasis on formal and gracious behavior.

It has been generally agreed that Chaucer accepted these requirements. One finds them all operating in the love affair of Troilus and Criseyde, and there is no real evidence that Chaucer is viewing them ironically. But between Andreas and Chaucer much water has run under the bridge; and what were the rules for courtly love have become, in large part, rules for good manners in noble society. Chaucer had early laid down his requirements for the noble lady in *Book of the Duchess*. She is "debonaire," merciful, poised, and gracious. And his approval settles on these qualities in others of his ladies. The charm of the Prioress lies largely in her particular kind of poise. Her exposed forehead and little dogs may make one skeptical of her vocation, but one is left in no doubt at all about her womanly attractions, nor that they arise from her pretty and gracious manners. The formel has little to say in *Parliament of Fowls*, but in the end it is she who has the final decision, and her dignity lies not only in this recognition: it emanates from the assurance and nobility of her conclusion. Blanche, the Prioress, Alceste, the formel, are different beings, but at one point they resemble each other—their bearing is faultless, and their "gentilesse" is not just a matter of form, for it grows out of character and has individual charm. Poise comes from assurance, and assurance comes not only from a knowledge of what is correct, but also from an adherence to what is kind and good and beautiful.

Criseyde is another realization of these qualities. Most important, as she herself says in extolling Troilus' virtues, she "koude good" (II, 1178). Mr. Coghill's description of her as a "girl" is inexact, for her behavior generally is that of a woman of the world. She is not inexperienced: she has been married and widowed; she has had to reestablish her position in her world after the turncoat flight of her father; and she lives in a city which is under the pressure of constant war. That she knows how to behave in society without even thinking about its forms is shown again and again. The picture of her and her maidens in the early stanzas of Book II shows an urbane and serene household; in harmonious leisure they listen to the reading of the tale of Thebes; when Pandarus enters, Criseyde welcomes him with graciousness and wit. During her interview with Ector, although she assumes the garment, voice, and pose of "shame," these trappings indicate her knowledge of what is correct, and her appeal to royal power shows some assurance in her own. When again she finds herself with the ruling class at Deiphobus' palace, her behavior is calmly correct. She is no green girl quavering a plea for her rights.

<sup>8</sup> Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, with introduction, translation, and notes by John Jay Parry (New York, 1941), pp. 107-41.

All her motions and words are those of a person who "knows how." In the temple she again assumes the attitude of modesty. She stands

ful lowe and stille allone,  
Byhyden other folk, in litel brede,  
And neigh the dore, ay undre shames drede. . . .  
(I, 178-80)

But despite the embarrassment of her situation she holds herself "With ful assured lokyng and manere" (I, 182). And Troilus is led to remark

hire chere,  
Which somdel deignous was, for she let falle  
Hire look a lite aside in swich manere,  
Ascaunces, "What! may I nat standen here?"  
(I, 289-92)

This first picture, in fact, puts into question the nature of her poise. Is this brashness, or sheer coquetry? Yet if one compares her first pose with that of Boccaccio's Criseida, one is inclined to call it dignified rather than bold. Criseyde is quiet and contained, and maintains an outward position of humility as a matter of form. Criseida is more aggressive. She gestures, lifts her mantle from her face, makes room for herself by pushing people around a little. Chaucer's lady, in proper medieval obeisance to the will of society, never forgets that its forms require of her a constant tact.

Nor is her manner of speaking that of an inexperienced girl. She is both articulate and discreet; she says no more than she wishes and says it as she wants. The short dry turn of phrase which emerges often under the pressure of Pandarus' ebullience shows considerable self-possession. When Pandarus gaily urges her to celebrate the month of May with dance, " 'I? God forbede!' quod she, 'be ye mad?'" (II, 113). He tells her that she cannot dispose of Troilus' letter without arousing the attention of her ladies. " 'I kan abyde til they be gon,'" says Criseyde (II, 1158). Pandarus at the window boosts the cause of Troilus with agitated eloquence. Look at him, look at him, he cries as Troilus rides by, " 'Lo, yond he rit!' 'Ye,'" answers Criseyde with amiable dryness, " 'so he doth!'" (II, 1284).

Experience has taught her to think before she speaks. The rain falls, Pandarus urges her to spend the night at his palace, and Criseyde concludes

"As good chep may I dwellen here,  
And graunte it gladly with a frendes chere,  
And have a thonk, as grucche and thanne abide . . ."  
(III, 641-43)

a decision, clearly, of a woman of the world. When, however, an occasion calls for rhetoric, she has it ready. Her speeches are highly tonal; they evoke a particular voice, and a particular person. Characteristically hers are the balance and serenity of such cadences as

"And yet his lif al lith now in my cure.  
But swich is love, and ek myn aventure."  
(II, 741-42)

And in her longer speeches, the sound and structure have their own peculiar smoothness. Take, for example, one stanza in her discourse on jealousy:

"But certeyn is, som manere jalouse  
Is excusable more than som, iwyse;  
As whan cause is, and som swich fantasie  
With piete so wel repressed is  
That it unnethe doth or seyth amys,  
But goodly drynketh up al his distresse;  
And that excuse I, for the gentilesse."  
(III, 1030-36)

The full easiness of sentence structure and the softness of sound, particularly in the rhymes, are expressive of an individual kind of "gentilesse." In speech; at least, she is not caught off balance by emergencies but retains her full dignity of expression: in the curtained recess after Deiphebus' dinner, for example (III, 159-81); at Pandarus' palace when she lectures Troilus on his jealousy (III, 988-1054); or in the privacy of her chamber when she elaborates her plan for the trip to and from the Greek camp (IV, 1254-1414). Each is a highly emotional moment, yet no broken phrases escape her lips. She follows formalities of introduction to her subject, giving, in her discourse on jealousy, some lines in praise of love, a stanza and a half to her love and admiration for Troilus, before she enters upon the full and dignified statement of her grief at his suspicion. One might consider this perfect control of expression an indication of coldness or lack of interest if one did not observe the emotion which sometimes follows it. When Pandarus first tells her of Troilus' passion, her first words seem dry and considered:

"Now em," quod she, "what wolde ye devise?  
What is youre reed I sholde don of this?"  
(II, 388-89)

But three stanzas later she falls to weeping. Similarly the lecture on jealousy seems a suspiciously smooth performance for one who is embarrassed, wounded, and agitated; and her frequent terms of endearment might seem timely cozening, were it not for the convincing swell of emotion as the speech progresses, and her tears and agitation at its close. Another enlightening passage occurs the next morning when Pandarus comes creeping in to exult over his success. He asks:

"Nece, how kan ye fare?"  
Criseyde answeerde, "Nevere the bet for yow,  
Fox that ye ben!"  
(III, 1563-65)

But her moment of impudence is followed immediately after by a wave of embarrassment. It seems obvious that these passages are neither the

words of a simple girl, nor do they show the composure born of indifference; rather, they exhibit the control that life in society has taught.

Constant tact and poise impose a secret inner life. Criseyde seems upon occasion aloof and self-sufficient. She has no intimates. Pandarus comes nearest to filling this role, but she keeps the relationship to the pretty deference and playfulness accorded to an elder relative. Other intimates there are none. There is a distance between her and her ladies—not even Antigone is a confidante. Even with her lover there is an occasional lack of openness. She does not surrender herself to him as he does to her—but, of course, the lady should not. And aloofness is a virtual requirement of the noble lady. If she must mask her own anxieties so as to maintain her "goodly chere," and ignore her inner feelings for the sake of "atempre governaunce,"<sup>9</sup> this discipline can also make her distant.

These are chilly virtues, however, and Criseyde is not chilly. Much of her tact (as well as her final vulnerability) arises from her eagerness to please. Her tender solicitude for the supposedly jealous Troilus is a very characteristic manifestation of this womanly trait. And with the endearing wish to please come other qualities. The ideal lady's bounty and kindness would have been hollow, had they not been backed by a desire to think well of others and to promote harmony among them. Complaisance stems also, in Criseyde, from a real gentleness of character, a spirit which cannot stand much buffeting. Gentleness, of course, has its maddening side. Again and again Criseyde is forced to the last resort of mild people, to stubbornness. She is easily influenced time and again—by Pandarus, by public opinion, and finally by Diomede's logic; yet there are certain points at which she sticks. Her resistance is amusing in the early stages of the drama. She withstands all of Pandarus' pressure and enthusiasm; she is not going to be bullied into this affair. But her stubbornness is more often a reflex than a result of thought, for she is not long-sighted, and her firmness is often (and especially in the first part of the story) of short duration. She refuses to read Troilus' letter, then reads it; she will not answer it, no indeed, but a few stanzas later she is at her writing table; she cannot consent to a love affair, but once she is alone in a room with Troilus, events proceed as planned.

The short term of these obstinacies can, however, be deceptive. In one sense she never gives in: she balks at any pressure which will hurry her into action foreign to her nature. The fatal instance of this intransigency is her plan for going to the Greek camp. In part only is Pandarus to blame for throwing to her the responsibility of devising some scheme to save the situation. He does indicate that it is up to her. "Women ben wise in short avysement," he says, "And lat sen how youre wit shal now availle . . ." (IV, 936-37). The code of good manners, too, assigned to the lady such important decisions. But

<sup>9</sup> *Book of the Duchess*, line 1008.

Criseyde's reasons for her particular plan and her arguments against Troilus' urgent plea to flee with him, arise not so much from Pandarus' flattery or from the forms of the time as from that important part of her nature which found itself in complete accord with these forms. There is no question in her mind about obeying the dictates of the state. She says immediately:

"My goyng graunted is by parlement  
So ferforth that it may nat be withstondre  
For al this world, as by my judgement."  
(IV, 1297-99)

Troilus' suggestion of flight is worse than repugnant to her—it is anarchic; she cannot contemplate the individual at odds with society. She recalls to him his duty to the state:

"God forbede,  
For any womman, that ye sholden so!  
And namely syn Troie hath now swicn nede  
Of help."  
(IV, 1556-59)

But the public interpretation of his motives is a matter of even more concern to her. Men would say, she claims, that he fled, not for love, but for "lust voluptuous and coward drede" (IV, 1573), and continues:

"Thus were al lost, ywys, myn herte deere,  
Yore honour, which that now shyneth so clere."  
(IV, 1574-75)

Thus the question of reputation is all important, and character becomes identified with it. To her mind honor comes to her from Troilus' virtue: his "moral vertu, grounded upon trouthe" (IV, 1672), she claims, was the first cause for her love; and certainly the feeling is implicit in Book III that she would not have given herself to Troilus had she not felt complete confidence in the steadiness and nobility of his character. Her sincerity is hard to doubt. Chaucer himself says of her plan—and cites his "auctour" as authority—that it was made "of good entente" (IV, 1416), and that she "spak right as she mente" (IV, 1418). But what is interesting here is the accord of her instincts with those of her society.

It becomes more and more obvious as the story progresses that she will not rupture the surface of pleasant relations. All is "for the beste" is the pathetic insistence behind her plan for departure (see IV, 1285, 1288, 1325). But surely the desire for harmony is one foundation stone of a good-tempered and well-mannered society. Criseyde most earnestly wishes to have at least the surface of human intercourse serene and agreeable. Even when she is tricked (as any relative of Pandarus must often be), she does not wish to embarrass her deceivers by recognizing the trick. She is not at all stupid. She must know somewhere in her consciousness that Pandarus deceives her time and again, but she is powerless to call his bluff. When, by a series of complex moves that stagger the brain, Pandarus inserts her alone—Criseyde, the decorous, the modest—into the intimacy of the alcove at Deiphobus'

palace, she does not for an instant betray any emotion save that which fits the supposed situation. Troilus is said to be ill; therefore she implores him to lie back on his bed; she even helps him down with her soft hands, and proceeds to thank him for his intercession in her grievous affair. The surface of the situation becomes more realistic, and Troilus pleads his love. Immediately she skips over the hiatus between the initial situation and what it has become, and at once (although she has stalled and balked, refused to read letters or to write them) admits him to her service as her particular knight, takes him in her arms and kisses him.

The same sort of comedy is played with even more charm at the end of Book III, where Criseyde cedes not to external logic but to Pite—to that interested sympathy which is the initial part of real love. After the extraordinary hocus-pocus of arrangements at Pandarus' dinner party, the invitation to remain there, the elaborate distribution of her ladies and Pandarus for the night's repose, the fabricated tale of Horaste and his intentions, Troilus' swoon—when, after all these remarkable events, Pandarus blithely comments that the lovers now have no need either of candle light or his presence and arranges them in the bed, Criseyde, to Troilus' plea that she now yield, sweetly asserts that her surrender is completely voluntary:

"Ne hadde I er now, my swete herte deere,  
Ben yold, ywis, I were now nought heere!"  
(III, 1210-11)

But there is a difference here. This is not a momentary yielding to circumstance. Here is her answer to Troilus' exultant cry: "Now be ye caught" (III, 1207). Pandarus may have deceived her, but she will not admit that Troilus has, and she immediately removes from his mind any notion that she has been forced to yield; she wishes it understood that she has surrendered completely, not to circumstances, but to her own final persuasion of his loyalty and trustworthiness. And it opens up the possibility that in one part of her mind she always knew that this was the only possible end of the courtship.

When the desire to please accords with her fundamental conviction, Criseyde is at her most admirable. But amiability is also her vulnerable point, and in the end it plays her false. In the Greek camp she can live up to none of her promises. When she greets her father, she is "muwet, milde, and mansuete" (V, 194). When Diomede comes to Calchas' tent, though she must recognize his pretensions, she welcomes him, sits by him, and calls for refreshments. She does not really repulse him when he pleads his suit. In fact she makes no decision at all:

"I say nat therfore that I wol yow love,  
N'y say nat nay. . ." (V, 1002-03)

And though she immediately

gan to sike, and seyde, "O Troie town,  
Yet bidden I God, in quiete and in reste  
I may yow sen, or do myn herte breste,"  
(V, 1006-08)

the touching lines suggest a greater grief: that she is powerless to carry out her promise, not through circumstance, but through her own nature. Open defiance is not for her.

Here lies the poignancy of the tragedy: she is not free to choose; her desire for harmony is more significant an element in Fortune's control than the external events. In this connection a bit of ironic counterpoint must be noted. The gesture that started off the tragedy, Calchas' decision to send for his daughter, was not a malicious one: he wished to do the right thing in the eyes of the world. It was, however, a freakish, not a characteristic, decision on his part; Criseyde's fatal plan grew out of a persistent and unchangeable wish to please. There is irony here, too; she seems the unhappy pawn of fate; for her constant amiability, a characteristic womanly virtue, was approved whole-heartedly by her society. And yet it was that very urge to compliance that led her to offend all society.

It may seem oversimplified to maintain that the bearing demanded by the Middle Ages for a lady is responsible for the charm of Criseyde. Certainly she has other attractions than good manners. She is sweet, fresh, soft, beautiful. But the word "charm" implies more than attractiveness; it demands some mystery. Sweetness, beauty, intelligence—no intrinsic mystery lies there. But poise itself is unfathomable, for poise implies some concealment—usually concealment with good intention, but always a cover. Under the constant grace and good humor of the poised individual lie who knows what grudges, what reservations, what emotions?

Certainly Criseyde is incalculable. One has only to call to mind certain images of her: Criseyde first seen in the temple "With ful assured lokyn and manere"; in her sweet and sudden yielding to Troilus; and finally in the Greek camp, sitting with downcast eyes, holding within her the secret of her sorrow. She has the quality of a good symbol in her infinite suggestiveness. She is much more evocative than Boccaccio's Criseida, whose frank knowledge and acceptance of her own emotions leave one in no doubt about her intentions. At each reading Criseyde stirs the mind to fresh speculation.

Henryson thought, with his *Testament of Cresseid*, to put a period to the story. The fate he chose for her may be morally suitable, but it is false to Chaucer's poem: a piteous and repugnant Criseyde is not the one who remains in one's mind. She is reminiscent of the eternally lovable heroines rather than the eternally damned, and she charms us more than those aggressive sirens, Dido and Cleopatra—or Shakespeare's Cressida. She brings to mind Botticelli's picture of Venus, of Love itself—passive and soft, harking back to the ancient purity that went before, looking forward with submissive apprehension to the monstrous pile of charges that will be laid before her.

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## DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON, PSYCHIATRIST

By RICHARD B. HOVEY

The wisdom of *Rasselas* has rightly attracted more attention than its psychology. But when we consider how autobiographical is the tale and how many generations have been fascinated by its author's complex personality, it is surprising in the middle of the present century that so few readers have turned to the book for clues to the heart of Johnson's mystery. Boswell, moreover, has provided the cue when, in a relevant passage in the *Life*, he reminds us that Johnson had traced the gradations of madness "with exquisite nicety in one of the chapters of his *Rasselas*.<sup>1</sup>" The reference obviously is to the great astronomer to whom, aside from the central characters, more space is devoted than to any other figure in the story.<sup>2</sup> He seems to deserve our consideration. For just as Rasselas represents the seeking Johnson<sup>3</sup> and as Imlac, the guide and philosopher, represents him in an ethical sense, so the astronomer represents Johnson as a suffering neurotic.

Readers easily recall the "morals" which are pointed in the chapters dealing with this personage. "To man is permitted the contemplation of the skies, but the practice of virtue is commanded." Again: "Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful." And again: "You are only one atom of the mass of humanity, and have neither such virtue nor such vice, as that you should be singled out for supernatural favours or afflictions." Finally, to their question of "the choice of life," Rasselas, the princess, and her favorite, Pekuah, discover that learning, wisdom, genius, and rectitude have brought the astronomer not happiness but misery. His own "choice" has been wrong. Yet his misery is psychological, not moral. It is his mental illness which interests Johnson, who describes it with an exactness and penetration that suggest our own century rather than the Age of Reason.

We first learn of the astronomer when Imlac gives to his youthful companions an account of his conversations with the great man. Gradually the subtle Imlac had won his way into the complete confidence of the lonely astronomer, upon whose mind, he soon suspected, "some painful sentiment pressed." Then came the confession: that the astronomer has for the preceding five years "possessed . . . the regulation of the weather" and is "probably the first of human beings to whom this trust has been imparted"! Whether his "distinction" is a reward or a punishment, the astronomer does not know; he does know

<sup>1</sup> I, 45, 3rd ed., with an introduction by C. B. Tinker (Oxford University Press, 1933). All references here are to this printing.

<sup>2</sup> Eight chapters in all: 40-47. All quotations from *Rasselas* cited here are from these chapters; 10th ed. (London, 1798).

<sup>3</sup> See Joseph Wood Krutch, *Samuel Johnson* (New York, 1944), Chap. VI, "Rasselas," especially p. 179.

that the terrible responsibility has multiplied his woes. In his learned pursuits he has sacrificed "all the common comforts of life." Such "prerogatives" as he has thus gained over other students are now "accompanied with fear, disquiet, and scrupulosity."

When Pekuah and the princess are amused by the report of this absurdity, Imlac bespeaks pity for "the heaviest of human afflictions." He declares further that all of us can suffer such a calamity, that disorders like the astronomer's "happen much more often than superficial observers will easily believe," and that the "power of fancy over reason" is a form of insanity which all human beings experience in varying degrees.

With difficulty Imlac arranges an audience for his young friends with the astronomer, who has never received women visitors and who in the first exchange of civilities with the two ladies is "timorous and bashful." For months the princess and Pekuah visit the old man, and he soon becomes quite sociable. By keeping him busy with friendly company, Imlac in time improves the condition of the astronomer, who admits now to finding "the conviction of his authority over the skies fade gradually from his mind." He gains a further insight, that the strength of his delusion varies according to nonrational influences: i.e., when happy among friends, he wonders at the dread which harassed him in solitude; but when alone again, he is seized and his thoughts are chained "by some irresistible violence." What still robs him of his peace of mind he explains thus: "But I am sometimes afraid lest I indulge my quiet by criminal negligence, and voluntarily forget the great charge with which I am intrusted. If I favour myself in a known error, or am determined by my own ease in a doubtful question of this importance, how dreadful is my crime!" Whereupon Imlac sums up the case with this psychiatric wisdom:

No disease of the imagination . . . is so difficult of cure, as that which is complicated with the dread of guilt: fancy and conscience then act interchangeably upon us, and so often shift their places, that the illusions of one are not distinguished from the dictates of the other. If fancy presents images not moral or religious, the mind drives them away when they give it pain; but when melancholick notions take the form of duty, they lay hold on the faculties without opposition, because we are afraid to exclude or banish them. For this reason the superstitious are often melancholy, and the melancholy almost always superstitious.

Two questions might be raised by these considerations of *Rasselas*: Can anything be learned here of Johnson's own melancholy and of his insight into it? And in what respects, if any, can his psychology be said to forecast that of Freud?

Certain notable similarities between the case of Johnson and that of his astronomer at once present themselves. Related to the melancholy of both are feelings of guilt.<sup>4</sup> These feelings give rise in each instance to anxieties which take the form of magnifying the conscience

<sup>4</sup> See Krutch on Johnson's melancholy, *passim*, and especially p. 108.

into a tyrant.<sup>5</sup> Conscience demands of the astronomer that he be responsible for the climatic conditions of the entire earth—a task he regards as more awful than that laid upon any monarch. By assuming this burden the astronomer mentally punishes himself; in psychological terms, he directs his aggressions against himself. Of Dr. Johnson's overt aggressiveness everyone knows enough. But of Dr. Johnson's inward aggressions against himself, one may legitimately conjecture that in his melancholy deeps the Doctor's own conscience put equally intolerable burdens upon him. Not that the melancholiac is always called upon to regulate the seasons; he may be able to refrain from all outward expression of his peculiar sense of duty; rather, in the overwhelming sense of his sinfulness he feels an inexorable demand to make some great sacrifice to expiate his crime—a "crime" obscure to himself. Such a sufferer may try to reason his way out of his confusion—as the astronomer did; even though he may suspect himself deluded and may struggle against his own irrationality, yet he proceeds at every step in dread lest he be dodging his huge responsibility.

The supreme sacrifice which the melancholiac makes is, of course, suicide; there are also lesser expiations, or partial suicides, which they may exact of themselves. We may therefore surmise that Johnson sought alleviation of his mental pain through fantasies of self-mutilation.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, we have Boswell's word for it: in one of his blackest moods Johnson is reported to have said, "I would consent to have a limb amputated to recover my spirits";<sup>7</sup> and elsewhere in the *Life* Johnson is quoted as observing, "Madmen are all sensual in the lower stages of the distemper. But when they are very ill, pleasure is too weak for them, and they seek pain."<sup>8</sup> That Johnson's morbid need for punishment found expression in something more palpable than fantasies of self-mutilation has been argued, with a remarkable shaping of evidence, in a recent paper by Katherine C. Balderston. Dr. Balderston's sensational disclosure is that Johnson sought masochistic relief through being chained, padlocked, and whipped by his friend Mrs. Thrale. This revelation does not astonish readers of Karl A. Menninger's *Man Against Himself*, a psychiatric study that cites numerous cases of persons in which the erotic element in their self-torment is indisputable: i.e., in his self-inflicted sufferings such a patient achieves simultaneously an erotic goal and the appeasement of

<sup>5</sup> For a psychiatrist's explanation of the exaggeration of conscience in the melancholiac, see Karl A. Menninger, *The Human Mind* (New York, 1946), *passim*, and especially p. 121.

<sup>6</sup> All forms of self-punishment, inward or overt, seem related to that impulse which leads to suicide. In each instance the psychic mechanisms have strikingly similar features, so that such end-products as nail-biting and suicide are but the two extremes of the same tendency. For the relation of melancholia to masochism, self-mutilation, and suicide, see Karl A. Menninger, *Man Against Himself* (New York, 1938).

<sup>7</sup> *Life*, I, 323.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 135.

a magnified conscience.<sup>9</sup> The circumstances of the composition of *Rasselas* are much to the point here. Writing the book immediately after the death of his mother (whom he had not visited for twenty years), Johnson must have been nearly shattered by grief and a sense of guilt. The loss of a loved one means, of course, the breaking of a bond of love. Such a bond, according to Menninger, has hidden within it a core of hostility. So, when the love object was suddenly removed, this bond, instead of being gradually absorbed and redirected as in the normal person, snapped back upon the melancholy Johnson's self and in so doing broke into its two component parts of love and hate. In the self-directed hatred which Johnson probably felt after his mother's death, his own conscience doubtless troubled him like that of his astronomer. And the astronomer's delusions became, as it were, a transcript of the dread fantasies poor Johnson was himself wrestling with at this critical time. Clearly both Johnson and his astronomer were troubled in their erotic lives. Although Johnson does not explicitly point a connection between the astronomer's celibacy and his delusion, he has this character complain, "I have missed the endearing elegance of female friendship, and the happy commerce of domestic tenderness." Besides, the means which palliate the astronomer's malady (i.e., distracting him from his preoccupation by keeping him busy and in pleasant company) are the same which Johnson often applied to himself and on more than one occasion recommended to his melancholy biographer.<sup>10</sup> Finally, regarding Johnson's superstitions—or more accurately, his compulsive rituals—Boswell has given us the evidence: taking the proper number of steps before entering a door, and so forth.<sup>11</sup> When Imlac ascribes "superstition" to the melancholiac, then, he includes Dr. Johnson as well as his astronomer.

Certain features of these chapters in *Rasselas* suggest insights into neurosis which are comparable to those of modern psychiatry: that anxiety is the central symptom of the depressed; that the anguish of guilt, the over-laden conscience, weighs heavily on the melancholiac; that such persons seek ease and expiation by further self-punishment, i.e., self-aggressions; that they are driven to "superstition," i.e., compulsive rituals; that sexual disturbances are a contributing factor in melancholia; that the symptoms of such illnesses are but exaggerations or intensifications of tendencies in the non-neurotic personality; and that the deeper causes of the victory of "fancy" over "reason" cannot be reached by ordinary rational processes—in a word, lie in the unconscious. That Johnson understood much of this and its significance to his own inward sufferings is indicated in the words he gives Imlac and in every detail of his characterization of the astronomer.

May we therefore claim that in groping toward understanding the

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Balderston's paper, "Johnson's Vile Melancholy," is in *Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker* (New Haven, 1949), pp. 3-14. See also Menninger, *Man Against Himself*, p. 42.

<sup>10</sup> *Life*, II, 278 and 312.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 323. Here also is the reference to amputation.

mechanisms of his own neurosis Johnson was pointing toward the twentieth century, toward Freudian psychology? Hardly. It is more precise to say that he was looking backwards, to the seventeenth century, to Robert Burton, and to *Anatomy of Melancholy*, "the only book that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise." Unquestionably, Johnson's fascination with that book was more than merely literary or philosophical.<sup>13</sup>

In his excellent study, *Psychiatry of Robert Burton*, Bergen Evans demonstrates convincingly in what remarkable ways the old anatomist anticipated the work of Freud.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Evans also discusses the influence of the *Anatomy* upon Johnson: its general effect on his talk and writing; his paraphrasing and at times applying to himself Burton's prescription against melancholy; his use of Burton as the source of the famous definition of *oats*; and the shaping effect which Democritus Junior had upon the spirit and the matter of *Vanity of Human Wishes*.<sup>15</sup> Evans says nothing, however, of the influence of Burton upon one of Johnson's most personal works, *Rasselas*.<sup>16</sup> If, as Evans suggests, it is a curious fact in the history of Western intellect that the study of the human psyche in some ways retrogressed during the eighteenth<sup>17</sup> and nineteenth centuries so that present-day ideas in this field (some of them "astonishingly similar" to those in *Anatomy of Melancholy*) were arrived at in complete independence of Burton, then we have here another instance of the depth and breadth of Dr. Johnson's understanding. For his intellectual acuteness, impelled by the agony of his heart, led him to see more clearly into Burton's meanings than did his own age and several generations which followed him.

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<sup>13</sup> *Life*, I, 145 and 654-55. Johnson objected to Burton's overuse of quotation. But when Burton wrote "from his own mind," Johnson declared that he "wrote with great spirit and great power."

<sup>14</sup> Prepared "in consultation with George J. Mohr, M.D." (New York, 1944).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44. Pointing out that Johnson does not quote the *Anatomy* in his *Dictionary*, Evans remarks: "He said that he had been careful to illustrate the meaning of words by selections drawn only from those authors whose works would not unsettle the religious or moral convictions of the young, and it may have been that he thought Burton too profoundly disturbing."

<sup>16</sup> Nor is *Anatomy of Melancholy* mentioned by Dr. Balderston, who otherwise gives sufficient evidence of Johnson's interest in medicine, especially that concerning "diseases of the imagination." Dr. Balderston, who calls for "a complete re-examination of Johnson's private life and emotional history," raises the question of how far Johnson understood his own malady. Toward such an examination and, more particularly, toward answering that question, it would seem that scholars must more fully explore Johnson's grasp of Burton as well as Burton's less obvious influences upon Johnson the personality.

<sup>17</sup> Not that the Age of Reason was everywhere and always blind to the workings of the unconscious. Freud himself offers us this reminder: "Among the works of the Encyclopédist Diderot you will find the famous dialogue, *Le neveu de Rameau*, which was translated into German by no less a person than Goethe. There you may read these remarkable words: *Si le petit sauvage était abandonné à lui-même, qu'il conservera toute son imbecillité et qu'il réunirait au peu de raison de l'enfant au berceau la violence des passions de l'homme de trente ans, il tordrait le cou à son père et coucherait avec sa mère.*" See Freud's *General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (Garden City, New York, 1943), p. 296. (Authorized English translation of the revised edition by Joan Riviere.)

## LYTTON STRACHEY AND THE VICTORIANS

By CHARLES RICHARD SANDERS

When Queen Victoria died on January 22, 1901, Lytton Strachey was almost twenty-one years old. His father, who had been born in 1817, was still living. His mother, born in 1840, was also living and would not die until 1928. Alive too were a number of uncles and aunts and brothers and sisters who had been born throughout the various decades of the long nineteenth century. The world which Strachey knew in 1901 contained, in addition, many of his parents' old friends and friends of the family belonging to his own generation who had already spent a considerable part of their lives during the reign of Queen Victoria. Raymond Mortimer has written truthfully that the weapons which Strachey and Virginia Woolf turned on the Victorians were forged in Victorian homes.<sup>1</sup> He could have added that those who wielded the weapons were themselves, in considerable part, the product of the age which they were attacking. Rebellious children of that age, they never quite succeeded in emancipating themselves from it. It had been bred in their bones, and they loved it even while they fought with vigor against it.

The symbol of Victorianism to Strachey was his memory of a house at 69 Lancaster Gate, just north of Kensington Gardens—the house where his family had begun to live when he was just four years old and where they continued to live until he was almost thirty. The old house represented all that was repulsive and all that was fascinating about the period from which he was to choose the subjects of some of his most successful studies. Particularly susceptible as he was to the influence of places, he remembered this abode of his childhood and youth as something gigantic and formidable which cast a potent spell over his emotions and imagination. Long years after he had left it, he was still aware of it, haunting his mind, forbidding, horrible, but irresistible. In 1922 he wrote an autobiographical essay in which he analyzed his thoughts concerning it. From this essay we can discover much concerning his attitude toward the Victorian Age. After speaking of himself as a "confirmed dreamer" and saying that he has often dreamed that he was back at Lancaster Gate, he added significantly that, although he would be disgusted if the family should actually return there, the dream always caused a feeling of intimate satisfaction to come over him.

Apart from my pleasure at it, no doubt it is hardly surprising that Lancaster Gate should haunt me. For it was a portentous place, and I spent in it the first twenty-five years of my conscious life. . . . My consecutive existence began in the nursery at Lancaster Gate—the nursery that I can see now, empty and odd and infinitely elevated, as it was when I stood in it for the first time at the age

<sup>1</sup> "Mrs. Woolf and Mr. Strachey," *Bookman* (New York), LXVIII (February, 1929), 625 ff.

of four with my mother, and looked out of the window at the surprisingly tall houses opposite, and was told that this was where we were going to live. . . .

One might say that Lancaster Gate was, in essence, the crowning symbol of the large family system.

Strachey goes on to describe the large drawing room, built to hold not only the immediate family—Sir Richard and Lady Strachey with their ten sons and daughters—but all the other branches of the family on Sunday afternoons. The gathering often included two highly eccentric uncles: Uncle William, a gentleman in spats, who had been well known at Holland House in the middle of the century and who, having once visited Calcutta, henceforth kept his watch set by Calcutta time; and Uncle George, “bent double with age and eccentricity, hideously sniffing, and pouring out his opinions on architecture to anyone who ventured within his reach.”

The Strachey family had seen better days, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century when the first Sir Henry Strachey, the secretary and intimate friend of Lord Clive, was able to entertain important members of the government not only at his house on Hill Street but also at country houses in Surrey and Somerset. Even in the early years of the nineteenth century, Strachey’s grandparents, the Edward Stracheys, were moderately wealthy and were important benefactors and friends of the struggling young Carlyle. But now the good days of the Stracheys, and of many other Englishmen, had ended:

What had happened was that a great tradition—the aristocratic tradition of the eighteenth century—had reached a very advanced stage of decomposition. My father and my mother belonged by birth to the old English world of country-house gentleman folk—a world of wealth and breeding, a world in which such things as footmen, silver, and wine were the necessary appurtenances of civilized life.<sup>2</sup> But their own world was different: it was the middle-class professional world of the Victorians, in which the old forms still lingered, but debased and enfeebled, in which Morris wallpapers had taken the place of Adam paneling, in which the swarming retinue had been reduced to a boy in livery, in which the spoons and forks were bought at the Army and Navy Stores. And then, introducing yet another element into this mixture, there was the peculiar disintegrating force of the Strachey character. The solid bourgeois qualities were interpenetrated by intellectualism and eccentricity.

Yet the total effect, materialized and enormously extended, was of tremendous solidity. Lancaster Gate towered up above us and around us, an imperturbable mass—the framework, almost the very essence, so it seemed, of our being. Was it itself perhaps one vast filth-packet and we the mere *disjecta membra* of vanished generations, which Providence was too busy or too idle to clear away? So in hours of depression, we might have unconsciously theorized: but nevertheless, in reality, it was not so. Lancaster Gate vanished into nothingness, and we survived. To me, that that regime would inevitably, some day, come to an end

<sup>2</sup> A strong Whig tradition dominated the political thought of most members of the Strachey family from the time of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 down to Lytton Strachey’s own day. And a Whig, to Lytton Strachey, was not a fierce rebel, but was a highly respectable and dignified gentleman.

was a dreadful thought—one not to be dwelt upon—like death; what would, what could happen, when we went away from Lancaster Gate?

Circumstances—a diminished income—brought about at length the unspeakable catastrophe; but I see now that, whatever had happened, however rich we might have continued, Lancaster Gate was in fact doomed. The disintegration would have grown too strong for it at last.<sup>3</sup>

Strachey's mixed feelings concerning the Victorian period are reflected throughout his writings. It appealed both to his instincts and to his curiosity, for not only had it claimed his earliest and most impressionable years, but it was an era of striking immensity, complexity, variety, and inconsistency. It was a paradox in history, full of contradictions, decadent grandeur, absurdity, and interest. In the essay on "Carlyle" published in 1928, Strachey described it as

a most peculiar age: an age of barbarism and prudery, of nobility and cheapness, of satisfaction and desperation; an age in which everything was discovered and nothing known; an age in which all the outlines were tremendous and all the details sordid . . . when one sat for hours with one's feet in dirty straw dragged along the streets by horses, when an antimacassar was on every chair, and the baths were minute tin circles, and the beds were full of bugs and disasters.<sup>4</sup>

In an essay on Matthew Arnold published in 1914, four years before *Eminent Victorians*, Strachey likewise wrote of the Victorian period as something complex and grotesque, possessing a strange hypnotic power which his emotions and imagination could not resist. The spell of Lancaster Gate was still heavy upon him when he wrote this passage—as it always would be. Here too, as in speaking of his old home, he was afraid of what had fascinated him, and made a vigorous effort to be just in commenting on a thing which, in the main, filled him with revulsion:

To the cold and youthful observer there is a strange fascination about the Age of Victoria. It has the odd attractiveness of something which is at once very near and very far off; it is like one of those queer fishes that one sees behind glass at an aquarium, before whose grotesque proportions and somber menacing agilities one hardly knows whether to laugh or to shudder; when once it has caught one's eye, one cannot tear oneself away. Probably its reputation will always be worse than it deserves. Reputations, in the case of ages no

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from the manuscript with the kind permission of James Strachey, brother and literary executor of the biographer. Mr. Strachey has very generously allowed me to record on microfilm many of the unpublished manuscripts and to use them, together with a number of uncollected reviews by Lyton Strachey published in the *Spectator*, in this study.

<sup>4</sup> *Portraits in Miniature* (New York, 1931), pp. 189-90. In this essay Strachey also referred to the friendship between his grandfather, Edward Strachey (1774-1832), "an Anglo-Indian of cultivation and intelligence," and Carlyle. The manuscripts provide evidence that Strachey associated his grandmother, Julia Kirkpatrick Strachey, with Evangelical religious faith, for which he had very little respect. She was a friend of Arthur Young and other members of the Clapham Sect and attended their gatherings. Carlyle mentions Mr. and Mrs. Strachey many times in his *Reminiscences* and letters. The Stracheys have always insisted that the original of Blumine in *Sartor Resartus* was Mrs. Strachey's cousin, Catherine Aurora ("Kitty") Kirkpatrick, and that Mrs. Strachey herself was the Duenna Governess. This was Mrs. Strachey's own opinion.

less than of individuals, depend, in the long run, upon the judgments of artists; and artists will never be fair to the Victorian Age. To them its incoherence, its pretentiousness, and its incurable lack of detachment will always outweigh its genuine qualities of solidity and force. They will laugh and they will shudder, and the world will follow suit. The Age of Victoria was, somehow or other, unaesthetic to its marrow-bones; and so we may be sure it will never loom through history with the glamour that hangs about the Age of Pericles or the brilliance that sparkles round the eighteenth century. But if men of science and men of action were not inarticulate, we should hear a different story.<sup>5</sup>

In attempting to understand and appraise the Victorian period, Strachey himself wrote as an artist and was clearly conscious of the fact. It was the artist in him that shuddered when he was confronted by the Victorian Age. But there was another side to Strachey—a very important one—which responded with wonder and admiration when he beheld the solidity and force of the period, with its amazing men of action and its brilliant scientists. Queen Victoria might be stupid and almost completely devoid of a sense of beauty; but her energy was tremendous, her force of character subdued almost all that came before it, and she was, all in all, too substantial to be treated with complete frivolity. As for the men of action, Strachey remembered with pride various stories about members of his own family who had fought with Clive and Hastings in India and with the Howe brothers in the American Revolution, who had helped to draw up the Treaty of Paris in 1783, and had explored Tibet in the first half of the nineteenth century. His own father, brilliant and versatile, had had a truly remarkable career in India, where he had had a horse shot out from under him in battle, had dug canals and built bridges, had constructed railways and served as the president of the largest and most prosperous one in that part of the world, and had set up the forestry division of the government there. Furthermore, his father was a distinguished scientist, the friend of Galton and Huxley, and a member of the Royal Society, who had gained recognition for his discoveries in meteorology, geography, and botany. From first to last, Strachey had great respect for scientists, and we know that in his original scheme for *Eminent Victorians* there were to be a dozen portraits, six of them to treat admirable persons, and all six of these were to be portraits of scientists.

<sup>5</sup> *Characters and Commentaries* (New York, 1933), p. 174. In a letter of November 8, 1912, Strachey wrote: "Is it prejudice, do you think, that makes us hate the Victorians, or is it the truth of the case? They seem to me a set of mouthing, bungling hypocrites; but perhaps really there is a baroque charm about them which will be discovered by our great-great-grandchildren, as we have discovered the charm of Donne, who seemed intolerable to the 18th century. Only I don't believe it. Thackeray and G. Meredith will go the way of Calprenède and Scudéry; they'll be curious relics in 50 years. I should like to live for another 200 years (to be moderate). The literature of the future will, I clearly see, be amazing. At last, it'll tell the truth, & be indecent, & amusing, & romantic, and even (after about 100 years) be written well. Quelle joie! To live in those days, when books will pour out from the press with all the filth of Petronius, all the frenzy of Dostoevsky, all the romance of Arabian Nights, and all the exquisiteness of Voltaire! But it won't only be the books that are charming then. —The people!" From an autograph letter in the possession of James Strachey, brother and literary executor of the biographer.

It is true that Strachey often seems to be very severe in dealing with men and women of action—with Essex, Arnold of Rugby, Gladstone, Disraeli, Florence Nightingale, General Gordon. But it was not the man of action as such that he objected to. One of the best of his uncollected essays is entitled "The Prose Style of Men of Action" in which he points out the elemental force to be found in the words of Cromwell, Clive, Hastings, and Lincoln, all men of action whom he admired.<sup>6</sup> But two types of men of action he did not admire: those who were deluded and those who were too fervid and zealous in pursuing even a good cause. Essex was to him a rather foolish though gifted nobleman deluded by visions of outworn, medieval, chivalric grandeur. Arnold of Rugby, with his hustle and bustle, dramatized all the misconceptions concerning the objectives and the government of British public schools which Strachey disliked most and from which he had suffered as a boy. Gladstone, like the age to which he belonged, was compact of numerous contradictions and, like a skillful juggler, had acquired the habit of balancing them upon the tip-end of his nose with astonishing ease.<sup>7</sup> Disraeli, brilliant politician that he was, had an extremely superficial philosophy of life and became the dupe of "the glittering outside of things." Florence Nightingale took herself and her commendable work so seriously that she drove herself and her most loyal friends to destruction. And General Gordon, with his Bible, his bottle of brandy, and his sword, was a mystic who often got lost in the cobwebs of his own mind.<sup>8</sup>

Strachey's purpose was not to condemn the Victorian Age as a whole but to subject it to a sifting process by which the good and the bad might be separated. He knew, of course, that it is natural for one age to react against the age which had immediately preceded it; and he knew that he was participating in just such a reaction against the Victorians:

Every age has a grudge against its predecessor, and generally the grudge is well founded. The Romantics and the Victorians were probably right: they had good reason to dislike the eighteenth century, which they found to be intolerably

<sup>6</sup> *Spectator*, C (Jan. 25, 1908), 141-42. This and a number of other unsigned contributions to the *Spectator* I have been able to identify as Strachey's partly through the help of James Strachey and partly through access to a marked file of that periodical, which I used with the kind permission of its former editor, H. Wilson Harris.

<sup>7</sup> See Strachey's subtle and brilliant analysis of Gladstone in *Eminent Victorians* (London, 1926), pp. 264-69. Strachey distrusted diplomats in general as the mere instruments of nationalism, which he believed would soon be obsolete. His suspicion toward Asquith during the First World War was fully as strong as that toward Gladstone.

<sup>8</sup> For Strachey on Disraeli see *Queen Victoria* and, especially, "Dizzy," *Characters and Commentaries*, pp. 252-54. On March 4, 1898, the eighteen-year-old Strachey wrote in his diary: "Dizzy was personally quite the most interesting man of the last generation." In early 1919 Strachey's mother attempted to persuade him not to write a biography of Queen Victoria but to write one of Disraeli instead. For Strachey on Gordon, see not only *Eminent Victorians*, but also "A Diplomatist: Li Hung-Chang," *Characters and Commentaries*, pp. 219-20. Strachey was a pacifist, and he derided military men at every opportunity.

rigid, formal, and self-satisfied, devoid, to an extraordinary degree, of sympathy, adventure, and imagination. . . . The nineteenth century, very properly, revolted, broke those chains, and then—proceeded to forge others of its own invention. It is these later chains that we find distressing. . . . And for the purposes of a historical vision, the eighteenth century is exactly what is wanted. . . . We are bewitched by it, just as, about the year 2000, our descendants, no doubt, will cast longing eyes towards the baroque enchantments of the age of Victoria.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly he saw his own role in the reaction against the Victorians in clear perspective; and he aimed at detachment in dealing with them as in dealing with various other subjects.

But the weaknesses of the Victorians were, nonetheless, real weaknesses, and the evils were real evils. It was unintelligent to proceed, in the name of fairness, with false assumptions. In Strachey's mind there was no doubt about what those weaknesses and evils were. Some of them were extremely serious and had already borne terrifying consequences in the history of the early twentieth century:

The Victorian Age, great in so many directions, was not great in criticism, in humour, in the realistic apprehension of life. It was an age of self-complacency and self-contradiction. Even its atheists (Lord Morley was one of them) were religious. The religious atmosphere fills his book, and blurs every outline.<sup>10</sup> We are shown Mr. Gladstone through a haze of reverence, and Emerson, and Marcus Aurelius. We begin to long for a little of the cynicism and scepticism of, precisely, the Age of Diderot, Rousseau and Voltaire. Perhaps—who knows?—if Lord Morley and his contemporaries had been less completely devoid of those unamiable and unedifying qualities, the history of the world would have been more fortunate. The heartless, irreverent, indecent eighteenth century produced the French Revolution. The Age of Victoria produced—what?<sup>11</sup>

To say that any age, however great it may be otherwise, has failed "in criticism, in humour, in the realistic apprehension of life" is certainly to make a major indictment against it. An age which has vigor but which lacks humor is like a powerful machine without a balance wheel. To Strachey, the Victorian Age was just such a machine, throwing its force clumsily and haphazardly in this direction and that.

<sup>9</sup> "The Eighteenth Century," *Characters and Commentaries*, pp. 280-81. Edmund Wilson has written that Strachey's chief role was "to blast once for all the pretensions to moral superiority of the Victorian Age" and that he found that age "an insult to the human spirit" but that after *Eminent Victorians* his ferocity steadily abated. "Lyton Strachey," *New Republic*, Sept. 21, 1932, pp. 146-48. The *Times Literary Supplement* for May 16, 1918, called *Eminent Victorians* "an extraordinarily witty book" which surviving Victorians would read with "mixed feelings," but also spoke of it as "a very sincere and scholarly attempt to understand" the preceding generation (p. 230). Max Beerbohm, who had some personal acquaintance with Strachey, wrote: "He disliked the Nineteenth Century in comparison with its forerunner, but it appealed to him far more than could the Twentieth." *Lyton Strachey*, the Rede Lecture of 1943 delivered at Cambridge University (New York, 1943), p. 19. But Clifford Bower-Shore has spoken the truth more precisely in his very fine critical essay *Lyton Strachey* (London, 1933), p. 52, when he wrote: "Strachey was not responsible for the reaction against the Victorian Age, although his work did, to a certain extent, foster that reaction. The pioneer revolutionists were Ruskin, Swinburne, Wilde, Butler, Shaw, and Wells."

<sup>10</sup> The book was Morley's *Recollections*.

<sup>11</sup> "A Statesman: Lord Morley," *Characters and Commentaries*, pp. 215-16. First published in *War and Peace*, February, 1918.

But did the Victorians really lack humor? Strachey made no serious effort to prove his indictment. Yet certainly for us much of Victorian humor has become dated. Almost anyone today who turns the pages of a volume of *Punch* for the 1850's would be very likely to agree with Strachey. Much of Dickens and some of Thackeray strikes us as rather quaint and antique humor at best. Strachey himself found Dickens extremely tedious. Of course, *Punch* and Dickens and Thackeray represent only a part of the vast and sprawling body of Victorian humor. The age was generous in its output of humor as it was in almost everything else. But it was not the quantity or even the variety of Victorian humor with which Strachey was concerned. He was concerned with its quality. He did not believe it to be great. The humorists whom he admired most—Aristophanes, Chaucer, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Molière, Swift, and Fielding—had one striking characteristic in common: they wrote as adults for adults. They carried laughter with them into the very midst of the facts and problems of a world which only adults could know.

Now Victorian humor as Strachey thought of it, not only the humor of Dickens and Thackeray, but of George Eliot and Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, also had a striking characteristic running through it. Victorian humor seemed to find its ultimate form and its immortality when it succeeded in making little children laugh. Austin Dobson's was admittedly a different kind of humor, but Austin Dobson's home was really in the eighteenth century although he lived in the nineteenth. This tendency of humor to withdraw from the adult world and to take sanctuary in the nursery was what alarmed Strachey most. Gilbert and Sullivan, with their pin-prick satire, did in a sense ridicule the foibles and shortcomings of the Briton and his institutions; but they did so in a delightful fairyland of their own creation which they skillfully used their art to insulate against the rude, noisy, bustling Victorian world in which adults were compelled to struggle. Dickens' world seemed real; but it too was actually, as G. K. Chesterton observed, a kind of fairyland. Hence, in Strachey's mind the Victorians' failure in humor was closely related to their failure in criticism and in the realistic apprehension of life.

Two of the chief Victorian critics exemplified these shortcomings. Ruskin was one of them. At the age of eighteen Strachey read some of Ruskin, and then laid him aside with great disappointment. Although he found Ruskin clear, the lack of humor and a sense of proportion was too much for him.<sup>12</sup> There is little evidence to show that he ever returned to Ruskin again. Matthew Arnold he gave much more attention to. In Strachey's mind Arnold played the role of a rather formidable adversary who must be destroyed, whatever the cost might be.

Arnold the poet was not too bad. Strachey in some of his early reviews did not hesitate to quote with approval some of the passages

<sup>12</sup> Strachey made an entry in his diary as early as March 11, 1898, in which he tells of reading *Sesame and Lilies* and finding it an unsatisfactory book.

from Arnold's poems.<sup>13</sup> But Arnold had also claimed for himself a major role as a Victorian critic of literature and society. Unfortunately his influence had been great. Strachey believed that "the essential and fatal weakness of the Victorian Age" was "its incapability of criticism" and that in Arnold this weakness displayed itself in an extreme form. Arnold was such a poor critic that he did not represent even the Victorians adequately.

Surely, before it is too late, a club should be started—an Old Victorian Club—the business of whose members would be to protect the reputation of their Age and give it a fair chance with the public. Perhaps such a club exists already—in some quiet corner of Pimlico; but if so, it has sadly neglected one of its most pressing duties—the hushing-up of Matthew Arnold.<sup>14</sup>

What was wrong with Arnold's criticism? Strachey's answer to this question indicates that his own strongest affinity as a critic was not, as one might suspect, with Boileau and the critics of the Enlightenment but with Coleridge and the romantic critics. For Strachey, like the romantics, began with the individual writer or artist, with his purpose, and with his prerogative of freedom. Hence he condemned Arnold's authoritarianism which insisted on subjecting all new works of art to certain extrinsic tests or "touchstones," selected specimens of the "best." In the essay on Racine Strachey denounced this method in no uncertain terms. It was, he said, a "method which attempts to define the essential elements of poetry in general, and then proceeds to ask of any particular poem whether it possesses these elements, and to judge it accordingly." Then he added with emphasis: "How often this method has been employed, and how often it has proved disastrously fallacious. For, after all, art is not a superior kind of chemistry, amenable to the rules of scientific induction. Its component parts cannot be classified and tested, and there is a spark within it that defies foreknowledge." The only trustworthy way to determine the value of a poet was to seek out the best that he had done. "There is only one way to judge a poet, as Wordsworth, with that paradoxical sobriety so characteristic of him, has pointed out—and that is, by loving him."<sup>15</sup> To begin with the consideration of what a poet lacked might soon lead to absurdity. Strachey had this point in mind when, in his essay on Pope, he used bathos to turn the tables on Matthew Arnold: "If one is to judge poets by what they are without, where is one to end? One might point out that Wordsworth had no sense of humor, that Shelley

<sup>13</sup> See "The Praise of Shakespeare," *Spectator*, XCII (June 4, 1904), 882; "Mr. Sidney Lee on Shakespeare," *Spectator*, XCVII (Dec. 1, 1906), 887-88.

<sup>14</sup> "A Victorian Critic," *Characters and Commentaries*, p. 175. First published in the *New Statesman*, Aug. 1, 1914.

<sup>15</sup> *Books and Characters* (New York, 1922), p. 12. The essay on Racine was first published in the *New Quarterly*, I (June, 1908). See also Strachey's "L'Art Administratif," *Spectator*, XCIX (Dec. 28, 1907), 1093-94: "'The State shall be my governors, but not my critics,' wrote a greater than Matthew Arnold . . . we shall do well to remember Milton's weighty words." Strachey is arguing here against the proposal to establish a national theater.

did not understand human beings, that Keats could not read Greek, and that Matthew Arnold did not wear a wig."<sup>16</sup>

But to look for the best did not mean that the critic should become so sympathetic that he lost all power of discrimination. Dowden, another Victorian critic, had done just that in his biography of Shelley. Strachey felt some hesitation before he could make up his mind which was worse—Dowden's or Arnold's treatment of Shelley:

It is a misfortune that the critics and biographers of poets should be for the most part highly respectable old gentlemen; for poets themselves are apt to be young, and are not apt to be highly respectable. Sometimes the respectable old gentlemen are frankly put out; but sometimes they try to be sympathetic—with results at least equally unfortunate. In Shelley's case it is difficult to decide whether the distressed self-righteousness of Matthew Arnold's famous essay or the solemn adoration of Professor Dowden's standard biography gives the falser impression. Certainly the sympathetic treatment is the more insidious. The bias of Matthew Arnold's attack is obvious; but the process by which, through two fat volumes, Shelley's fire and air have been transmuted into Professor Dowden's cotton-wool and rose-water is a subtler revenge of the world's upon the most radiant of its enemies.<sup>17</sup>

Although Arnold was not soft, he was firm about what careful scrutiny revealed to be the wrong things. Poetry, he had said, must be a criticism of life. Conduct, he had declared with a suspicious neatness, was three-fourths of life. And the great poet must have "high seriousness." Strachey found in Arnold a critic who, with all his brilliance and persuasiveness, could not separate aesthetic from moral values. Thus Arnold was the child of his age and manifested its chief weakness. But he also sinned against good sense in his use of a mincing hocus-pocus by which he was able to call Pope a classic of prose rather than a classic of poetry.<sup>18</sup> As for Arnold's doctrine of high seriousness—a doctrine which led him to deny Chaucer a place among the great poets—Strachey recognized in it the fatal lack of a true sense of humor and its appreciation which had distressed him in his reading of other Victorian writers.<sup>19</sup> The high-toned humanism of Arnold had too little humanity in it to satisfy Strachey, for he believed that human beings could enjoy full scope for their multiform activities and functions only when they were free, free to live and free to laugh. In Strachey's position there was a danger that individualism would be carried to the point of intellectual and social anarchy; it was to combat just such an anarchy that Arnold had wrought out his doctrines of criticism and culture. Yet Strachey's strictures upon Arnold have significance for us because of two truths which they emphasize: first, that the critic who seeks to establish universal standards must take great pains to

<sup>16</sup> *Pope*, the Leslie Stephen Lecture for 1925 (Cambridge, 1925), pp. 26-27.

<sup>17</sup> "An Adolescent," *Characters and Commentaries*, p. 201.

<sup>18</sup> Even Gosse praised Strachey for boldly asserting that Pope's poetic criticism of life was, "simply and solely, the heroic couplet." "*Pope and Mr. Lytton Strachey*," *Leaves and Fruit* (London, 1927), p. 107. This book is dedicated "To Lytton Strachey with Affectionate Admiration."

<sup>19</sup> *Pope*, pp. 11-14.

avoid any principle which results in narrowness; and, second, that works of art have a significance within themselves apart from the significance which they possess in their relationship to other works of art, just as individual human beings have a significance apart from that which they possess as members of society.<sup>20</sup>

But Strachey knew, as we have seen, that Matthew Arnold was not merely a critic; he was also a poet, with a well-developed sense of beauty. There had appeared in him, particularly in his younger days, something of the rebel and the romantic. Arnold was not altogether bad, even in Strachey's eyes, but Arnold's father was. As a matter of fact, all that was worst in Arnold himself could be traced back to the father. The emphasis upon ethics and conformity, the suffusing of religion through all things, the distrust of humor unless it was on the level of a child's mind, a faith in institutions, and the assumption that extrinsic measurements could be devised by which intrinsic substances could be appraised with entire validity—these were primary errors which had misled father and son.

Behind the Arnolds stood Oxford and Aristotle, and Strachey had little faith in either. Toward Oxford he manifested the pride and prejudice of a Cambridge man.<sup>21</sup> As for Aristotle, it should be remembered that Strachey with all his love of order, perspicacity, and the definite, regarded both art and life as complex and mysterious. Life was a wondrous thing, never completely understandable, and art was magic. Aristotle, with his generalizations, classifications, and simplifications, could never arrive at the heart of the mystery. Dr. Arnold was not merely an Aristotelian; he was also a fervid Christian who desired to make adherence to Christian principles in conduct a qualification of citizenship. Strachey had no faith whatsoever in Christianity or Christian institutions. Moreover, Dr. Arnold was usually esteemed to be the father of the British public school system as it existed in most of the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth. Strachey could see nothing but stupidity and evil in the British public schools as he knew them.<sup>22</sup> All in all, everything that Arnold of Rugby stood for was palpably absurd. And yet he had been one of the most

<sup>20</sup> One of Strachey's unpublished satirical dialogues takes place between Cleopatra and Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Matthew Arnold's niece. Guy Boas says that one of the subjects for biography which Strachey was considering at the time of his death was Matthew Arnold. He adds that Strachey was also considering Browning, General Booth, and Benjamin Jowett as possible subjects. *Lynton Strachey*, English Association Pamphlet No. 93, November, 1935.

<sup>21</sup> Readers of Stanley's *Arnold* (Toronto, 1938), will recall that Dr. Thomas Arnold, himself an Oxford man, seriously considered sending Matthew to Cambridge but finally decided that he must go to Oxford, because Aristotle was not neglected there. Matthew Arnold in "The Study of Poetry," it should be remembered, gave Aristotle credit for the phrase "high seriousness."

<sup>22</sup> Another of Strachey's satirical dialogues is entitled "Headmaster and Parent." In it a very stupid headmaster makes a completely unconvincing defense of his educational objectives and methods. For evidence that there were other Cambridge men who agreed with Strachey about the public schools of their day, see E. M. Forster's *G. Lowes Dickinson* (London, 1934) and Lionel Trilling's *E. M. Forster* (Norfolk, Conn., 1943).

influential teachers of the Victorians: he had done much to determine the tone and temper of their age.<sup>23</sup>

To Strachey, it was an age which displayed a fundamental weakness in the ease with which it allowed itself to become the dupe of Dr. Arnold and other religious fanatics. Cardinal Manning, too, with his fierce egoism, his unlimited ambition, his skill in pulling the strings of ecclesiastical politics, his ruthlessness, and his rigid allegiance to orthodox Catholic dogma, found it to be an age in which he could make his way with very little difficulty.

What had happened? Had a dominating character imposed itself upon a hostile environment? Or was the Nineteenth Century, after all, not so hostile? Was there something in it, scientific and progressive as it was, which went out to welcome the representative of ancient tradition and uncompromising faith? Had it, perhaps, a place in its heart for such as Manning—a soft place, one might almost say?<sup>24</sup>

It was an age which boasted of its liberalism and tolerance, but it was not tolerant, certainly not in the realm of ethics; and it was most likely to favor energetic persons such as Manning, Dr. Arnold, Disraeli, and Gladstone, who combined suppleness and agility of method with a firm and consistent appeal to the middle-class prejudices which were characteristic of the time.<sup>25</sup>

For the middle class was supreme in the nineteenth century. The virtues and the weaknesses of the age were of this class. "The last vestige of the eighteenth century had disappeared; cynicism and

<sup>23</sup> Strachey's intimate friend J. M. Keynes in "My Early Beliefs," an important memoir written in September, 1938 (more than six years after Strachey's death), virtually admits that he and the other members of the Cambridge-Bloomsbury group carried their revolt against conventions and against conformity to institutions too far. He says that they based their thinking and conduct on the much too optimistic assumption that man as an individual may be entirely rational. "We were not aware that civilisation was a thin and precarious crust erected by the personality and the will of a very few, and only maintained by rules and conventions skilfully put across and guilefully preserved . . . we carried the individualism of our individuals too far." But Keynes also has much to say in favor of his group. He believes that they were particularly fortunate in escaping from the Benthamite tradition. "But I do now regard that as the worm which has been gnawing at the insides of modern civilisation and is responsible for its present moral decay. We used to regard the Christians as the enemy, because they appeared as the representatives of tradition, convention and hocus-pocus. In truth it was the Benthamite calculus, based on an over-valuation of the economic criterion, which was destroying the quality of the popular Ideal. Moreover, it was this escape from Bentham, joined with the unsurpassable individualism of our philosophy, which has served to protect the whole lot of us from the final *reductio ad absurdum* of Benthamism known as Marxism." *Two Memoirs* (London, 1949), pp. 96-97, 98-101. Strachey usually saw eye-to-eye with Keynes, but I can only guess whether he would have agreed with him if he had been alive in 1938. Arnold of Rugby, we should remember, had great admiration for Coleridge, the chief early nineteenth-century critic of Benthamism.

<sup>24</sup> *Eminent Victorians*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> Strachey had high esteem for Milton, particularly for Milton's literary art, but after he had seen a performance of *Comus* at Cambridge in 1908, he complained of the "complacent moralizing of the poet" and called it "a play of prigs." "Comus at Cambridge," *Spectator*, CI (July 18, 1908), 94-95. See also "Avons-Nous Change Tout Cela?" *Characters and Commentaries*, p. 152.

subtlety were shrivelled into powder; and duty, industry, morality, and domesticity triumphed over them. Even the very chairs and tables had assumed, with a singular responsiveness, the forms of prim solidity."<sup>26</sup> In the main, it was an age of decadence, and the decadence was particularly marked in the area of manners. The genuine manners of landed Whigs and of other eighteenth-century people who wore their manners as if born to them now gave way to the cheap ostentation and self-conscious behavior of tea merchants and factory owners. Strachey was never one who considered manners merely superficial, and the loss here was to him a great one. In "Madame de Lieven," as in "Lancaster Gate," he spoke with some feeling of this decline in manners: "For a generation it was just possible to be an aristocrat on manners alone. Then, at last, about 1830, manners themselves crumbled, undermined by the insidious permeation of a new—a middle class—behaviour; and all was over. Madame de Lieven was one of the supreme examples of the final period. Her manners were of the genuinely terrific kind."<sup>27</sup> In Victorian manners, as in most things characteristically Victorian, there was contradiction. It displayed itself in the welcome which Victorian England gave to Sarah Bernhardt.

It is odd but certainly true that the eighteenth century would have been profoundly shocked by the actress who reigned supreme over the nineteenth. The gay and cynical creatures of the *ancien régime* . . . would have recoiled in horror before what they would have called the "indécence" of one of Sarah Bernhardt's ordinary scenes. Every age has its own way of dealing with these matters; and the nineteenth century made up for the high tone of its literature and the decorum of its behaviour by the luscious intensity of its theatrical displays.<sup>28</sup>

Strachey's opinions concerning Victorian writers show that as a critic he was remarkably consistent in adhering to the principle that authors and their works should be judged as individual persons and things. He was not guilty of condemning them wholesale because they were Victorian, but was careful in dealing with them, as in dealing with the age, to discriminate and to form his judgments on the basis of intrinsic qualities. A brief examination of what he said about a few Victorians whose opinions, talents, and works varied widely will illustrate his practice here.

His opinion concerning Swinburne was about what one might expect. We know that, while he was at Cambridge, he gave much time to reading his poems. He liked Swinburne's love of freedom, his individualism, his paganism, his glorification of man, and his critical attitude toward the older Victorians. He wrote poems such as the "Hymn to the Flesh" in imitation of Swinburne.<sup>29</sup> He responded with intense pleasure to the vigorous rhythms of Swinburne's verse and

<sup>26</sup> *Queen Victoria* (New York, 1921), p. 195.

<sup>27</sup> "Madame de Lieven," *Portraits in Miniature*, pp. 118-19.

<sup>28</sup> "Sarah Bernhardt," *Characters and Commentaries*, p. 257.

<sup>29</sup> Dated in the manuscript April 25, 1902. This poem has not been published; but another Swinburnian poem "Ningamus Serta Rosarum" was published in the *Cambridge Review*, XXII (June 5, 1901), supplement, xiii.

gave him credit for exerting a strong influence on such poets as Kipling. "It is difficult to believe that the *Barrack-Room Ballads* would ever have been written if Mr. Swinburne had never lived."<sup>30</sup> He was delighted with the Elizabethan strain in Swinburne's poetry, for he himself had loved the Elizabethans ever since when, as a small boy, he had copied the lyrics of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Marlowe into his commonplace book. Swinburne's prose commentary, *Age of Shakespeare*, he praised highly; and he defended his method as a literary critic. Swinburne, he said, was a Platonist rather than an Aristotelian. "His criticism makes no use of the careful and patient methods of comparison and analysis, but works rapidly and boldly by the light of intuition. . . . This kind of criticism is not to be despised, though it happens to be out of fashion. These are the days of infinite analysis and universal sympathy."<sup>31</sup> Yet Swinburne, Strachey knew, was quite capable of being swept off his feet by enthusiasm. After Swinburne and Rossetti had "discovered" a play by Charles Wells entitled *Joseph and His Brethren*, first published without attracting much attention in 1824, and after Swinburne had helped to get it republished with an introduction in which he had praised Wells's efforts to recapture the Elizabethan manner and had even drawn some comparisons with Shakespeare, Strachey rebuked Swinburne for his extravagance: "What genius is there in the whole of literature which does not seem a trifle flat and a trifle empty when it is compared with Shakespeare's?"<sup>32</sup>

Strachey's attitude toward Tennyson suggests the influence of Swinburne. When Strachey was at Cambridge, he wrote a parody of Tennyson's "Frater Ave Atque Vale."<sup>33</sup> One of his satirical dialogues written in imitation of Voltaire takes place between Tennyson and Catullus.<sup>34</sup> In it the Roman poet scolds the Victorian laureate for misrepresenting him. Strachey regretted, also, that Tennysonian blank verse had had an influence for the worse on modern plays in verse. Although he believed that blank verse was "supreme as a means of dramatic expression," he was convinced that modern blank verse, under the influence of Tennyson, was that "in which the native vigour of the rhythm is sacrificed to sweetness."<sup>35</sup> As Strachey grew

<sup>30</sup> "Provincial Letters," *Spectator*, XCVIII (April 13, 1907), 574-75.

<sup>31</sup> "A Poet on Poets," *Spectator*, CI (Oct. 3, 1908), 502-503.

<sup>32</sup> "Elizabethans Old and New," *Spectator*, CII (March 13, 1909), 420-22.

<sup>33</sup> Unpublished. The date on the manuscript is September, 1902.

<sup>34</sup> These dialogues, of which there are about a dozen, deserve to be published. They are not dated in the manuscript, but their crisp, economical style suggests the period from 1912 to 1932.

<sup>35</sup> "Some New Plays in Verse," *Spectator*, CI (Dec. 12, 1908), 998-99. Strachey's mother, who had shared her enthusiasm for Jonson, Donne, and Milton with her son, had met Tennyson several times. He had once read one of his poems to her. She liked to hear poetry read with emphasis on meaning rather than on sound, and she did not like Tennyson's chant. She was the friend of Browning and very much preferred him as a poet. See Jane Maria Lady Strachey, "Some Recollections of a Long Life," *Nation and Athenaeum*, XXXIV (Jan. 5, 1924), 514-15; XXXIV (Feb. 23, 1924), 730-31; XXXV (July 12, 1924), 473-74; XXXV (Aug. 30, 1924), 664-65.

older, more and more of his own poems were written in heroic couplets as he kept before him the example of the Augustan poets. But Strachey took delight in melody wherever he found it, whether in Mozart, Swinburne, or Tennyson. He was particularly impressed by the trueness of Tennyson's ear.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, despite Tennyson's preoccupation with moral and religious ideas which certainly did not make his poems more exciting to Strachey, the poet and the biographer had far more in common than appears at first glance. Both thought of writing as art and kept before them constantly an ideal of excellence in craftsmanship. Both produced work which, in the main, suggests the ivory smoothness of classicism; but in the lives as well as the work of both there was a shaggy quality—vigorous, untamed, unpredictable. Such a buried pool of rough energy was to them a problem and also a secret source of strength when it could be made to subject itself to the discipline of classicism.

To rebel against the Victorians was not, in Strachey's eyes, necessarily to reflect credit on oneself. Carlyle, hurling thunderbolt after thunderbolt as a Victorian among Victorians, was certainly wordy; but so also was Bernard Shaw.<sup>37</sup> And W. E. Henley, a critic and poet who had promised to lead literature out of the Victorian wilderness, had displayed very serious faults. When four volumes of Henley's collected works appeared in 1908, Strachey reviewed them for the *Spectator*. He found Henley's pages "crowded not only with words which are in themselves unusual, but with curious and unexpected verbal combinations"; and his opinion was that the "far-fetched words and the queer constructions not only catch our attention, they worry it." Henley belonged to the romantic school but was not a master of its method:

He could imitate the boldness and the singularity of the great romantics—their extravagance of tone, their strange and varied vocabulary—but he lacked the crowning art which with them lifts what would otherwise be merely an odd assemblage of heterogeneous details into the region of imperishable beauty. Great poetry, whatever else it may be, is always harmonious; and this truth is nowhere more apparent than in the works of those writers who, like the major Elizabethans, succeed in blending together the most diverse elements into a single whole, so that their poetry resembles a varied landscape flooded with evening light.

Henley lacked "that supreme and passionate sense of beauty" which makes such an achievement possible. Henley's criticisms were "full of fire and variety"; they were the work of "a broad and a masculine mind." Yet in them emphasis became an affectation. "They produce the effect of a man who is for ever shouting and slapping his thigh

<sup>36</sup> "Music and Men," *Spectator*, CI (Dec. 19, 1908), 1059-60.

<sup>37</sup> "Some New Carlyle Letters," *Spectator*, CII (April 10, 1909), 577-78; "Carlyle," *Portraits in Miniature*, pp. 178-90; "Three New Plays," *Spectator*, C (June 6, 1908), 899-900. One of the plays reviewed in the last article was Shaw's *Getting Married*. Strachey wrote: "*Le secret d'ennuyer c'est de tout dire*; and Mr. Shaw insists upon saying everything."

and poking one in the ribs." In truth, Henley was hardly a writer: he was a talker. For a writer there was no more dangerous fallacy than the belief that what is admirable in conversation is no less admirable in print. The prose of conversation was a very different thing from the prose of writing. All in all, one found in Henley's prose "a rapid throwing out of happy things rather than a mature utterance of wise ones." Henley was at his best when he was not aiming high—when he was deliberately light.<sup>38</sup>

The Victorian writers whom Strachey felt the least hesitation about praising were those who, despite the formidable forces of their age, managed somehow to be themselves and to express their particular talents, however different they might be from those of other writers. Emily Brontë had done just that in *Wuthering Heights*. Strachey valued highly the sanity, the breadth, and the humor which he believed were characteristic of the central tradition of the English novel—of Fielding, of Thackeray, and of Dickens; but he also found delight in the novel of concentrated imaginative power and intense passion. In *Wuthering Heights* he found such a novel, somewhat lonely among other English novels; and he paid Emily Brontë the high tribute of comparing her work with Dostoevski's, in which extravagance and frenzy seethe through the pages with almost unbelievable force, and with a genius suggesting that which created unearthly beauty in the midst of a thunderstorm and the ravings of madmen in *King Lear*.<sup>39</sup>

Strachey also found an individualism which possessed integrity in T. E. Brown's dialect verse. Brown had humor, the humor of simple folk who lived upon the Isle of Man, humor with a local habitation and a name. But Brown also had other admirable qualities. "He belongs to the same school as Chaucer and Browning—the school of vast and varied observation, of humorous and intimate sympathy, and of abounding force."<sup>40</sup> Likewise, Strachey joined his cousin St. Loe Strachey, editor of the *Spectator*, and Thomas Hardy in great admiration for William Barnes and his poems in the Dorset dialect. Barnes used a method, Strachey said, like that of Theocritus and unlike that of Burns, which depended upon a combination of inward simplicity of spirit with an outward elaboration of form:

Through the refinement, the subtlety, and the elaboration of his expression, we become acquainted with a tranquil and tender mind. We breathe the atmosphere of the open country, we come face to face with sober goodness and innocent affections and unostentatious mirth. No poet brings us closer to the beauty of an English landscape,—the fields and the hills and the hedges, the friendly trees and the changing skies, the old houses with the stone windows, the

<sup>38</sup> "The Works of W. E. Henley," *Spectator*, CI (Aug. 8, 1908), 196-97.

<sup>39</sup> "Dostoevsky," *Spectator*, CIX (Sept. 28, 1912), 451-52. Strachey read Dostoevsky's novels in Constance Garnett's translations as they appeared in 1912 and 1914. He had in general great admiration for the Russian, and was particularly impressed by his psychological insight. It should be noted that he read the novels in the years just before the composition of *Eminent Victorians* (1918). See also "A Russian Humorist," *Characters and Commentaries*, pp. 168 ff. First published in the *Spectator*, CXII (April 11, 1914), 610-11.

<sup>40</sup> "The Poetry of T. E. Brown," *Spectator*, C (June 13, 1908), 938-39.

tripping figure along the lane. His colours are all of the purest—blues, greens, whites—dyed with that soft brilliance which has never been seen out of England, and which, once seen, can never be forgotten.<sup>41</sup>

Prizing humor as highly as he did, Strachey gleaned the Victorian fields in search for it. And he found it in one of the minor poets in whom we today—perhaps we should confess in our ignorance—find only sentimentalism. He found humor, as the Victorians themselves had found it, in Thomas Hood, the poet whom most of us know only because he wrote "The Song of the Shirt" and "The Bridge of Sighs." Strachey was delighted with Hood's punning "Epitaph on a Candle" and other similar verses.<sup>42</sup> He loved the Elizabethans and Charles Lamb too well to despise the pun. "Good puns," he declared, "may be extremely witty,—those of Hood are, of course, the classic examples, in which the play of words exhibits, with marvellous neatness, some queer intellectual crux."<sup>43</sup>

But Strachey did not really rediscover the humor in Tom Hood. He did not have to. Tom Hood's puns were an important part of the atmosphere of Lancaster Gate. There was much in that atmosphere, as Strachey himself has told us, which weighed down upon him like an incubus and which he had to throw off in order to enjoy freedom of spirit; yet surviving at Lancaster Gate was a robust and vigorous tradition of laughter which helped to protect it from what Virginia Woolf in *Orlando* has called the "damp" of the nineteenth century. A Strachey in the Elizabethan period had laughed with his friends Ben Jonson, John Donne, and perhaps Shakespeare. A Strachey in the third quarter of the seventeenth century had laughed over Cervantes and quaint German tales with his friend John Locke. Carlyle tells us that his friend and patron Edward Strachey, Lytton Strachey's grandfather, was a man of great sense and mirth who constantly quoted Chaucer. And in the drawing room at Lancaster Gate on Sunday afternoons in the late nineteenth century one might occasionally find, in addition to Strachey's eccentric Uncle William and Uncle George, another uncle of a very different sort—Uncle Edward.

Sir Edward Strachey (1812-1901) was truly an eminent Victorian. A versatile man of letters who contributed to the *Quarterly Review*, *Fraser's Magazine*, *Spectator*, *Notes and Queries*, and *Atlantic Monthly*, his conversation, like that of his father, was spiced with quotations from Chaucer and other great humorists. One of his articles

<sup>41</sup> "The Poetry of William Barnes," *Spectator*, CII (Jan. 16, 1909), 95-96.

<sup>42</sup> "Light Verse," *Spectator*, CII (Feb. 20, 1909), 304-305. Strachey also wrote here: "Light verse may be described as the millinery of literature. Its most characteristic qualities are precisely those of a lady's hat: it is charming, gay, graceful, and it does not last."

<sup>43</sup> "The Follies," *Spectator*, CII (Feb. 13, 1909), 262-63. Strachey here also quotes with admiration Thomas Love Peacock, another Victorian humorist. Peacock had worked in the India House beside Edward Strachey, the biographer's grandfather, and they were intimate friends. Both loved humor and more than once derided their colleague James Mill, who, it seemed to them, lacked the power to laugh.

contributed to the *Quarterly Review* was entitled "Nonsense as a Fine Art." Here he analyzed and discussed nonsense as it had appeared in "The Nun's Priest's Tale," Cervantes, the Icelandic "Lay of Thrym," the writings of Erasmus and of Luther, Shakespeare, Charles Lamb, and Thomas Love Peacock, as well as in many other places. "One of the last official fools of the English court was Archie Armstrong," wrote Sir Edward, "[who] died on the First of April (1646)." The Victorian successors of Armstrong, he said, were the elder Matthews, Albert Smith, Corney Grain, and Tom Hood.<sup>44</sup>

Thus we may in part understand how Strachey could love the Victorian Age even while he was struggling to emancipate himself from it. He was well aware that in "that great ocean of material" there was, certainly for him, an undertow, and that the tide of reaction against Victorianism in which he participated was not altogether a movement in one direction. He was the better critic of the age for not being content to judge it by what seemed to be happening on the surface of that vast sea.

*Duke University*

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<sup>44</sup> CLXVII (October, 1888), 335-65.

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## THE IRON MADONNA AND AMERICAN CRITICISM IN THE GENTEEL ERA

By LEONARD LUTWACK

The narrow moralism of America in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, its pseudo-religion, optimism, ideality, and glorification of refined manners and respectability—all these were subsumed in the image of woman. Foremost among the idols of that time, the idealization of woman was the last to be relinquished by the genteel tradition in its struggle for survival against the spirit of realism. Nowhere was there less inclination for conservative critics to compromise than in surrendering the purity of woman and the sanctity of marriage to the irreverent treatment of realistic fiction. Their stubborn resistance against the advance of realism on this particular front accounts, in part, for the extreme violence with which early twentieth-century fiction exploited the more naturalistic aspects of sex relations. Through simple reflex it became the sport of avant-garde novelists to besmirch the fair image of woman so dearly cherished by critics and readers of the genteel era.

To the question "Why We Have No Great Novelists," H. H. Boyesen, one of the few fearless critics of his time, gave one emphatic answer: American women.<sup>1</sup> It is they, he maintained, who "constitute collectively an Areopagus from whose judgments, in matters relating to fiction, there is no appeal." The novelist is subject to the power of American women, Boyesen revealed, through the agency of "the editors of the paying magazines, behind whom sits, arrayed in stern and bewildering loveliness, his final judge, the young American girl. She is the Iron Madonna who strangles in her fond embrace the American novelist." The unfortunate result of this censorship is a "safe, conservative, romantic" literature in America, "a distinct half-conscious lowering of standard, a distinct descent to a lower plane of thought or thoughtlessness." Boyesen drove the point home remorselessly, hitting the tenderest spot in the myth of American moral superiority when he asserted that after reading *Anna Karenina* we can appreciate "the difference between a literature addressed to girls and a literature intended for men and women."

Few critics dared to agree with Boyesen publicly; the question of the American girl was an explosive subject, as Henry James had discovered in 1878 with the publishing of *Daisy Miller*. In a direct answer to Boyesen's article, Richard Watson Gilder, editor of the *Century Magazine*, repeated the familiar argument that the purity imposed upon American literature by women was "worth paying for with a

<sup>1</sup> *The Forum*, II (February, 1887), 615-22.

little prudery."<sup>2</sup> The consensus of critical opinion on this matter was expressed by a writer in *Scribner's Magazine*: "so far as her tyrannous censorship of literature is concerned . . . [the American girl] can be circumvented. Hawthorne had no difficulty in doing so. . . . Possibly, indeed, she is destined to keep our literature pure in intention while permitting it to become realistic in fact."<sup>3</sup>

The extent of the American girl's control over literature and criticism may be estimated by the almost universal respect which editors and critics had for the "daughter test," or the "family fireside test." In Maurice Thompson's definition of this criterion, a novel is "not wholesome reading for any person at any place" if it is "unfit for open reading at the family fireside."<sup>4</sup> This was an old and honored tradition in American criticism, the classic formulation being that by A. C. Coxe in a review of *The Scarlet Letter*: this novel, wrote Coxe in 1851, "would suffice . . . to Ethiopize the snowiest conscience that ever sat like a swan upon that mirror of heaven, a Christian maiden's imagination."<sup>5</sup> James Russell Lowell gave the daughter test the imperativeness of an eleventh commandment: "let no man write a line that he would not have his daughter read."<sup>6</sup> Many variations of the same doctrine may be found in the criticism of the last quarter of the century. H. D. Sedgwick commended Bryant for never writing "a verse that might not with propriety be read to virgins and to boys";<sup>7</sup> George William Curtis had nothing but praise for the older New England writers because there was "no doubtful page in them, nothing which for its spirit or insinuation or tendency need be withheld from any eye."<sup>8</sup> It was the rule of Henry Mills Alden, the editor of *Harper's Magazine*, that "the Magazine must contain nothing which could not be read aloud in any family circle."<sup>9</sup>

William Dean Howells administered the daughter test when he was editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*; in rejecting a "new and good" article by Brander Matthews, he wrote: "I am somewhat anxious for 'the cheek of the young person' who might be pained by the equivocalities necessarily touched upon. She reads the Atlantic a great deal and has to be tenderly regarded. I hope you will not be too much disgusted by this editorial prudishness."<sup>10</sup> Howells had to hide Zola's books "from the children,"<sup>11</sup> and he was distressed over not finding on the news-

<sup>2</sup> "Certain Tendencies in Current Literature," *New Princeton Review*, IV (July, 1887), 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Scribner's Magazine*, X (September, 1891), 395.

<sup>4</sup> *Ethics of Literary Art* (Hartford, 1893), p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> *Church Review*, III (January, 1851), 507; reprinted in *Notorious Literary Attacks*, ed. Albert Mordell (New York, 1926).

<sup>6</sup> *Letters of James Russell Lowell*, ed. Charles Eliot Norton (Cambridge, 1904), II, 139.

<sup>7</sup> *Atlantic Monthly*, LXXIX (April, 1897), 544.

<sup>8</sup> *Harper's Magazine*, LXXXIII (November, 1891), 962.

<sup>9</sup> J. Henry Harper, *House of Harper* (New York, 1912), p. 530.

<sup>10</sup> Howells to Matthews, Aug. 25, 1880 (Brander Matthews Collection, Columbia University Library).

<sup>11</sup> *Life in Letters of William Dean Howells*, ed. Mildred Howells (New York, 1928), I, 311.

stands a novel decent enough for a lady to read while traveling on the "cars."<sup>12</sup> In *Criticism and Fiction* he admitted that between the editor of a magazine and his readers there was "a tacit agreement that he will print nothing which a father may not read to his daughter, or safely leave her to read herself,"<sup>13</sup> but Howells considered this merely a slight restriction for the American novelist. "What does *she* think?" he once asked Charles Dudley Warner, who wanted his advice on an article. "She, whosoever she be is always his infallibilist critic, and when she seconds any doubt of mine, I give way."<sup>14</sup>

Although in public critics accepted the reign of the Iron Madonna with the greatest composure, in their private correspondence they often expressed resentment against her tyranny. The "*virginibus maxim*," Edmund Clarence Stedman confessed to a friend, "is often badly in the way of the best poetry," but, like every other critic, Stedman chose not to resist the convention and contented himself with the feeble complaint that in his work as an anthologist "it goes against the grain to omit what is often the star lyric or ballad of a minor poet."<sup>15</sup> The English novelist George Du Maurier, however, could not resist the temptation to present his devoted public of American girls with a most amusing parody of the daughter standard, which, by the way, was as strictly enforced in England as in America. In his phenomenally successful serialization of *Trilby* in *Harper's Magazine*, Du Maurier wrote, tongue in cheek:

[Trilby] had all the virtues but one; but the virtue she lacked . . . was of such a kind that I have found it impossible so to tell her history as to make it quite fit and proper reading for the ubiquitous young person so dear to us all.

Most deeply to my regret. For I had fondly hoped it might one day be said of me that whatever my other literary shortcomings might be, I at least had never penned a line which a pure-minded young British mother might not read aloud to her little blue-eyed babe as it lies sucking its little bottle in its little bassinet.<sup>16</sup>

Possibly Du Maurier enjoyed his joke at the expense of his readers, but it is more likely that the satirical intent of this passage did not escape the many daughters who by this time (1894) were beginning to desert the older magazines for the less prudish *Cosmopolitan* and *McClure's*. Toward the close of the century, the daughter standard was taken much more seriously by elderly editors and critics than by their daughters, and criticism began to look quite antiquated in its effort to preserve an image of American womanhood that had less and less resemblance to the typical American woman.

Reality or bugbear, the Iron Madonna was responsible for three unfortunate results in the conduct of magazine criticism: (1) the pos-

<sup>12</sup> "Editor's Study," *Harper's Magazine*, LXXXIII (August, 1891), 476.

<sup>13</sup> *Criticism and Fiction* (New York, 1892), pp. 159-60.

<sup>14</sup> Howells to Warner, April 11, 1874 (Charles Dudley Warner Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut).

<sup>15</sup> *Life and Letters of Edmund Clarence Stedman*, ed. Laura Stedman (New York, 1910), II, 184.

<sup>16</sup> *Harper's Magazine*, LXXXVIII (January, 1894), 187.

sible area of critical discussion was limited by the fear of offending the sense of decency of women; (2) in literature women had to appear in a complimentary light; and (3) critical judgments were made preferably from the woman's point of view, or with the woman's probable reaction in mind. Somewhere in the critic's deliberations there was always the woman lurking. In an article on Tolstoy, George Kennan argued: "suppose that [a] bleeding, defenseless, half-naked girl had appealed to you for protection and had thrown herself into your arms"; would you be able then to follow Tolstoy's theory of nonresistance and leave the poor girl to the mercy of brutal authorities?<sup>17</sup> No, indeed! This was the supreme test of the age, and, in terms not always so heartrending as Kennan's, it was the test that literature had to meet. Even such an excellent critic as Howells sometimes let his discussions drift into the typical nonsense which the female reader's point of view encouraged. Thus, after dismissing the economic implications of John Hay's *The Bread-Winners*, Howells addressed himself to the grave problem of Captain Farnham's behavior with Maud Matchin:

Does he [the author] mean that it was right for Captain Farnham to kiss Maud Matchin when she had offered herself to him in marriage and dropped herself into his arms, unless he meant to marry her? . . . we feel the delicacy of the point. Being civilians, we will venture to say that we fear it was quite in character for an ex-army man to kiss her, and so far the author was right. Whether it was in character for a perfect gentleman to do so, we cannot decide; something must be conceded to human nature and a sense of the girl's impudence, even in a perfect gentleman.<sup>18</sup>

This was certainly worrying the question, but, undeterred, Howells went on to explore another problem which this important novel on the labor-capital conflict posed: was Maud Matchin a fair representative of the typical product of the American high school?

The idealization of woman that made sex a forbidden subject must be given first rank as a contributing cause to the stultification of American criticism in the late nineteenth century. One index of the freedom enjoyed by individuals in any given period of history is the degree to which their age restricts speculation on certain subjects—sex and religion in the Victorian era, politics and economics in the twentieth century. John Jay Chapman's description of the effects of the taboo against abolition talk in the New England of the 1820's applies as well to the sex taboo in the 1880's and 1890's: "So long as there is any subject which men may not freely discuss, they are timid upon all subjects. They wear an iron crown and talk in whispers. Such social conditions crush and maim the individual."<sup>19</sup> This is what

<sup>17</sup> *Century Magazine*, XXXIV (June, 1887), 257.

<sup>18</sup> *Century Magazine*, XXVIII (May, 1884), 153. The review was signed only with the initial "W," but it has been ascribed to Howells by his bibliographers (*Bibliography of William Dean Howells*, ed. William M. Gibson and George Arms [New York, 1948], p. 108) and by Hay's biographer (Tyler Dennett, *John Hay* [New York, 1933], p. 115).

<sup>19</sup> *Emerson and Other Essays* (New York, 1898), p. 10.

Henry James had in mind when he took exception to Walter Besant's high praise for the morality of English fiction;<sup>20</sup> it is not to be congratulated for its morality, James replied, but condemned for its

moral timidity . . . aversion to face the difficulties with which on every side the treatment of reality bristles . . . cautious silence on certain subjects . . . a traditional difference between that which people know and that which they agree to admit that they know, that which they see and that which they speak of, that which they feel to be a part of life and that which they allow to enter into literature.<sup>21</sup>

The opposition of criticism to the new and the original in contemporary literature was abetted by the timidity which the sex taboo encouraged. What retarded the acceptance of realistic fiction was not only the spirit of objectivity and pessimism that seemed to underlie it, but the uncomplimentary roles given to female characters by the realists. A distasteful view of life was easier to accept than the spectacle of a woman conducting herself in a manner unbecoming a lady. Hardy's fatalism did not offend critics nearly as much as the degeneration of a fine woman like Tess or the slur cast upon marriage in *Jude the Obscure*. James's moral objectivity and artistic complexity irritated critics, but not much more than his female characters. His mothers "have added a new horror to realism," complained one reviewer.<sup>22</sup> It seemed indecent for novelists to subject ladies to the candid and exhaustive methods of psychological realism. No less a realist than H. B. Fuller drew the line at that point:

But psychology has always seemed to me to be a rather unholy thing; it seems so unpleasant to rummage in a nice girl's mind. To me a moderate but accurate objectivity appears much better. The horrible relentlessess of Madame Bovary appears hardly more repugnant to me than the psychological indecencies of *Un Scrupule*.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps critics did not dislike psychological realism so much as they feared to face the horrible things it might uncover in the lives of supposedly "pure" women.

It was of little avail for Boyesen to cry out against the Iron Madonna. Her sway was too readily borne, and even enlarged, by genteel critics; her cult went much deeper than the typical colonial and frontier partiality toward women. In its more extreme though not unusual form, the cult had Woman replacing Christ as the redeemer of mankind. This is the conclusion that one cannot escape after reading Sidney Lanier's *The English Novel* (New York, 1883), in which the poet, turned critic, attributes to woman the great evolution of human personality from the "feeble" beginnings in the plays of Aeschylus to the

<sup>20</sup> *Art of Fiction* (Boston, 1884), pp. 29-30.

<sup>21</sup> *Longman's Magazine*, IV (September, 1884), 519; reprinted in *Partial Portraits* (London, 1899), p. 405.

<sup>22</sup> *Scribner's Magazine*, XXIV (September, 1898), 380.

<sup>23</sup> Fuller to Howells, Nov. 3, 1893 (William Dean Howells Papers, Harvard College Library).

glorious apotheosis in Mrs. Browning's Eve, Tennyson's Princess Ida, and George Eliot's heroines. "They have redeemed the whole time," was Lanier's hosanna. On a much higher level of imagination there was Henry Adams, whose lifelong quest for something to occupy both his restless intellect and mystical yearning ended on the thirteenth-century porch of Mary at the Cathedral of Chartres.

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## DER STEPPENWOLF HESSE'S PORTRAIT OF THE INTELLECTUAL

By SEYMOUR L. FLAXMAN

Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf* is a novel of ideas and a novel of character, and my purpose here is to consider the book as a novel of character, as a work of art. It is the delineation of character, after all, that gives a novel the power to stand alone, to resist the aging processes of time, and to appeal to a large audience. This is not to belittle or disparage in any way the ideas involved. For Hesse takes up many of the central problems of our time, problems which have still not been solved. In this respect, and in many others, Hesse's work invites comparison with that of his friend and fellow Nobel Prize winner, Thomas Mann.<sup>1</sup>

The hero of Hesse's novel is a middle-aged, middle-class writer and thinker named Harry Haller. A free-lance journalist by profession, Haller is certainly not the average man of his class or even of his group. His questioning, skeptical intelligence leads him to close examination of the affairs of the intellect and to art, music, and philosophy. Furthermore, the folly of attempting to separate the ideas from the novel itself is at once apparent when we realize that the central character is a man of ideas. He has a creative mind, and Hesse might have made him an artist, a type he has portrayed elsewhere. Although he labels him as an intellectual from the very beginning of the book, the descriptive "Tractat vom Steppenwolf" points out that Haller also stands for the artist: "Die allermeisten Intellektuellen, der größte Teil der Künstlermenschen gehört demselben Typus an."<sup>2</sup>

Thus we have in *Der Steppenwolf* the portrait of an intellectual. And one of the most striking things about this portrait is that it is a self-portrait. This close connection between author and hero is immediately evident in the names of the two most important characters. As he did in *Unterm Rad*, Hesse uses his own initials, merely coining the new name Harry Haller to fit them. It is no accident that the woman who works such a decisive change in Harry's life is named Hermine, the feminine form of Hermann. Her boyish face reminds Haller of his childhood friend, whose name was Hermann, of course.

But the resemblance between Harry Haller and Hermann Hesse goes beyond mere initials. It extends to the events of their lives. Perhaps no German author since Goethe has put more of himself into his work. As Hugo Ball has pointed out: "Es ist für den Dichter Hesse charakteristisch, daß er jeden Schritt seines Lebens dokumentiert hat;

<sup>1</sup> Karl Schmid has compared the attitudes of Hesse and Mann toward the Bürger in his interesting little book, *Hermann Hesse und Thomas Mann: Zwei Möglichkeiten europäischer Humanität* (Olten, 1950), pp. 18 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Steppenwolf, Gesammelte Werke* (Berlin, 1927), p. 18.

ja daß sein literarisches und poetisches Werk nur aus den Schritten, Beobachtungen und Erfahrungen der eigenen Person schöpft."<sup>3</sup> The careful reader of Hesse cannot help noticing this tendency in his works, and it should suffice to mention only a few of the numerous examples of it in *Steppenwolf*.

Haller is approaching his fiftieth birthday, as was Hesse when he wrote the novel. Haller's account of how his wife lost her mind and left him is a literary reinterpretation of the tragedy of Hesse's first marriage. The hero's spiritual anguish and his protests during the First World War are the author's. Not only does Haller, like Hesse, write articles denouncing the war, but he even echoes the lament that formed the title of one of Hesse's articles: "O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!" (p. 257).<sup>4</sup>

The resemblance thus goes deeper than the events of their outer lives; it extends to their intellectual affinities, their spiritual sufferings, the depths of their souls. They both admire Goethe, Hölderlin, Jean Paul, Novalis, and Dostoevski. Like Hesse, Haller is "ein Genie des Leidens," and the "Blick ins Chaos" which is prescribed as the cure for Haller (p. 20) is the very one described by Hesse in his *Kurzgefaßter Lebenslauf*.<sup>5</sup> Is it any wonder that when Haller cries out in despair, "Wie hatte es mit mir dahin kommen können, mit mir, dem beflügelten Jüngling, dem Dichter, dem Freund der Musen, dem Weltwanderer, dem glühenden Idealisten?" (p. 77), he gives us a description which actually fits Hesse better than it does himself.

From the moment we first meet Haller, we see an intellectual, a man "sickled o'er with the pale cast of thought." He has "ein . . . trauriges Gesicht, aber ein waches, sehr gedankenvolles, durchgearbeitetes und vergeistigtes" (pp. 12-13). The affairs of everyday life confuse and embarrass him, for his mind is on other things. Yet he is not the conventional absent-minded professor, nor is he an intellectual technician interested only in his own specialty. His passionate devotion to the affairs of the spirit makes it impossible for him to tolerate the narrow-minded Philistine who has invaded the world of ideas.

Forever in pursuit of the great and eternal truths, the wolf of the steppes will not be satisfied by little pleasures and mediocre happiness. It is not his destiny to be happy. There is something of Faust in his eternal discontent and in his intellectual cravings. Even Hesse compares the Steppenwolf with Faust, and his novel suggests a modern prose version of Goethe's drama. But unlike Faust, the Steppenwolf is faced with destruction in this world. There is a perilous danger in dedicating oneself completely to the intellect: "Ja, und wer denkt, wer das Denken zur Hauptsache macht, der kann es darin zwar weit bringen, aber er hat doch eben den Boden mit dem Wasser vertauscht,

<sup>3</sup> Hugo Ball, *Hermann Hesse: Sein Leben und sein Werk* (Berlin, 1927), p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Betrachtungen, Gesammelte Werke* (Berlin, 1928), pp. 245-52.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Kurzgefaßter Lebenslauf, Traumfährte* (Zürich, 1945), pp. 111-12.

und einmal wird er ersaufen" (p. 28). Hesse had already observed that Hölderlin had succumbed to this danger.<sup>6</sup> One cannot ignore the claims of nature, for man is only "die schmale, gefährliche Brücke zwischen Natur und Geist" (p. 27). That is where Harry stands, afraid to go forward to God and immortality, and unable to go back to Nature. There is no way back; birth has thrown him into the stream of human development, and even suicide will not solve his problem.

For the average middle-class citizen this conflict between *Geist* and *Natur* is easily resolved. The middle-class man avoids extremes, he prefers compromise, at comfortable room temperature. But Haller symbolizes the modern intellectual. He has shunned compromise, and for him the conflict has become a neurosis. His notes are not

bloß die pathologischen Phantasien eines einzelnen, eines armen Gemütskranken. . . Ich sehe in ihnen aber etwas mehr, ein Dokument der Zeit, denn Hallers Seelenkrankheit ist—das weiß ich heute—nicht die Schrulle eines Einzelnen, sondern die Krankheit der Zeit selbst, die Neurose jener Generation, welcher Haller angehört, und von welcher keineswegs nur die schwachen und minderwertigen Individuen befallen scheinen, sondern gerade die starken, geistigsten, begabtesten. (p. 36)

Haller is of middle-class origins himself, but his zealous cultivation of *Geist* has made him a misfit in middle-class society. He is "a queer duck," a *Sonderling*, who is conscious of his peculiar position. As he puts it, "ich lebe so etwas abseits, etwas am Rande, wissen Sie" (p. 28). Harry does not want to live among the herd. He prefers to be an outsider, to be alone, even in the cities crowded with people, for "Einsamkeit ist Unabhängigkeit" (p. 60). Too much of a nonconformist to fit into the community, Haller feels cut off, he is filled with a sense of isolation, of loneliness. That is the essential significance of the animal symbol he has chosen as his image: "Ein . . . in die Städte und ins Herdenleben verirrter Steppenwolf—schlagender konnte kein andres Bild ihn zeigen, seine scheue Vereinsamung, seine Wildheit, seine Unruhe, sein Heimweh und seine Heimatlosigkeit" (p. 30). Naturally, this wolf of the steppes cannot behave respectfully among the sheep; he is too often tempted to bite them. Haller is disgusted and repelled by the hypocrisy of the middle class. That is the meaning of the funeral, with its carefully engineered cemetery, its hired functionaries, its artificial flowers and sentiments, its professional theatricalism.

After the disillusionment of the funeral, Harry is glad to meet the Professor. He looks forward to enjoying a bit of human warmth and sociability at the Professor's home. Harry is really a good fellow, and wants to be nice to people, but when he thinks of all the compulsory politeness, the scholarly chitchat, the fussing with his clothes, his anti-

<sup>6</sup>Cf. "Über Hölderlin," *Betrachtungen, Gesammelte Werke*: "Dies war Hölderlins individuelles Problem, und er ist ihm erlegen. Er hat eine Geistigkeit in sich hochgezüchtet, welche seiner Natur Gewalt antat; sein Ideal war, alles Gemeine hinter sich zu lassen . . ." (p. 206).

social tendencies almost get the better of him. Everything might still have turned out all right, if only Harry had not noticed the picture of Goethe. Some third-rate artist had turned his demonic intellectual hero into a "Salongoethe," a kind of handsome old character actor. That was just too much! "Hier waren schön stilisierte Altmaster und nationale Größen zu Hause, keine Steppenwölfe" (p. 85). And then the Professor's castigation of the anti-war article, an article Harry had written himself! It had been bad enough when the Professor's wife told him how well he looked, although he knew he had aged terribly. But she asked about his wife, and he had to explain that she had left him. At last he could stand it no longer. He just had to tell them what he thought of their miserable Goethe etching, and of the Professor's stupid acceptance of militarism, too.

When Haller leaves the Professor's home after this scene, his isolation and loneliness seem complete. The only thing he can think of doing now is to go home and cut his throat. Of course, he knows he has acted rashly. He should not express his opinions with the same lack of consideration he resents in others. Haller is aware that he has his faults, and he is capable of criticizing himself, too capable. That is one of the things that is wrong with him. At the same time, he is hypersensitive, and easily offended by ordinary slights or unintended indignities. It is only later, from Hermine, that he learns what he should have done: "Wenn er klug wäre, so würde er über den Maler und den Professor einfach lachen. Wenn er verrückt wäre, würde er ihnen ihren Goethe ins Gesicht schmeißen. Da er aber bloß ein kleiner Bub ist, läuft er heim und will sich aufhängen . . ." (p. 103).

In spite of his feeling of separation from normal life, in spite of his contempt for the *Spießbürger*, Harry really yearns for the comfort and security of the Professor's world. Like most intellectuals, his roots are in the middle class. Deny it as he will, he longs to return to it. Although his room may be disordered, with the books scattered about in heaps, he always makes sure that the room itself is in one of those neat, well-kept, middle-class homes that smell of soap and furniture polish. There is certainly nothing haphazard about his financial arrangements. He puts his money in the bank, and he invests shrewdly in the securities of sound corporations. *Der Steppenwolf* may be isolated from the middle class, but he has no intention of isolating himself from the middle-class comforts he has been brought up on. The wolf may enjoy roaming wildly about the steppes, but he likes to have a nice warm hearth to come home to:

Ich weiß nicht, wie das zugeht, aber ich, der heimatlose Steppenwolf und einsame Hasser der kleinbürgerlichen Welt, ich wohne immerzu in richtigen Bürgerhäusern, das ist eine alte Sentimentalität von mir. Ich wohne weder in Palästen noch in Proletarierhäusern, sondern ausgerechnet stets in diesen hochanständigen, hochlangweiligen, tadellos gehaltenen Kleinbürgernestern, wo es nach etwas Terpentin und etwas Seife riecht und wo man erschrickt, wenn man einmal die Haustür laut ins Schloß hat fallen lassen oder mit schmutzigen Schuhen hereinkommt. (p. 45)

At heart Haller is really a conservative, and it is only to a certain extent that he can forget his middle-class scruples:

[Harry] hatte theoretisch nicht das mindeste gegen das Dirnentum, wäre aber unfähig gewesen, persönlich eine Dirne ernst zu nehmen und wirklich als seinesgleichen zu betrachten. Den politischen Verbrecher, den Revolutionär oder den geistigen Verführer, den Staat und Gesellschaft ächteten, vermochte er als seinen Bruder zu lieben, aber mit einem Dieb, Einbrecher, Lustmörder, hätte er nichts anzufangen gewußt, als sie auf eine ziemlich bürgerliche Art zu bedauern. (p. 14)

Yet it is a prostitute who saves him from destroying himself. By the time Harry meets Hermine, the questionable nature of human life has become a personal torment to him. He has concentrated on his intellectual self so thoroughly that he is killing himself. In Hermine he finds another self, and she enables him to enter the magic theater, where he discovers still other selves. This is strong medicine, and to some the cure may seem worse than the disease, but Hesse warns us that it is "Nicht für jedermann!" Harry remains a good *Bürger* to the last, for when he disappears, he leaves "unversehens und ohne Abschied, aber nach Bezahlung aller Rückstände" (p. 34).

The Steppenwolf likes to cling to his ways, but Hermine and her pleasure-loving friends eventually bring him around. It is no easy task, for his polite intellectual manners stick out clumsily. Hermine complains that after she has been calling him *du* for an hour, he still addresses her as *Sie*. Harry has always mistrusted and avoided gay young girls like Hermine, and even later on, in the restaurant, he watches carefully to see whether the waiter will treat her with respect. His middle-class respectability makes him self-conscious: "—Oh, was für ein Scheusal du bist! Jetzt hat er, weiß Gott, zu den andern Leuten hinübergeschleift, ob sie es nicht sehen, wenn er einen Bissen von meiner Gabel kriegt! Sei ohne Sorge, du verlorener Sohn, ich werde dir keine Schande machen. Aber wenn du zu deinem Vergnügen erst die Erlaubnis anderer Leute brauchst, dann bist du wirklich ein armer Tropf" (pp. 133-34). The trouble with Harry is that he takes everything too seriously, even love. Hermine promises him a change: "Ideal und tragisch lieben, o Freund, das kannst du gewiß vortrefflich. . . . Du wirst nun lernen, auch ein wenig gewöhnlich und-menschlich zu lieben" (p. 157).

Hermine soon arranges for Harry to meet her friend, and his love affair with Maria begins in characteristic fashion. He has spent the evening listening to music, not jazz, of course, but music of the most intellectual sort, church music, Buxtehude and Bach. Upon returning to his room after the concert, he finds Maria waiting for him in his bed. His first thought is for his middle-class respectability, and he fears that his landlady would evict him if she were to find out. Maria, noticing his dismay, offers to leave. Harry is too kind-hearted to offend her by allowing her to do so, and he urges her to stay, explaining that he just isn't in the mood! Maria's thoughts are not revealed, but she

knows her trade, and soon becomes Harry's expert guide into the land of sexual delight. She is an uneducated girl, with even less *Geist* than Hermine. Yet Harry learns to appreciate her. He finds her charms not at all incompatible with those of the music he has just heard. Indeed, he confesses, "Maria schien mir die erste wirkliche Geliebte zu sein, die ich je gehabt hatte. Immer hatte ich von den Frauen, die ich geliebt hatte, Geist und Bildung verlangt, ohne je ganz zu merken, daß auch die geistvollste und verhältnismäßig gebildetste Frau niemals dem Logos in mir Antwort gab, sondern stets ihm entgegenstand" (p. 178).

Just as Hermine's male counterpart is Harry, so Maria's is Pablo. He is as handsome as she is beautiful, just as devoid of thought, and just as devoted to the delights of the senses. Pablo is supposed to be something of a linguist, but Harry soon learns that he has not studied languages at a university. He seems to have picked up his basic vocabulary from waiters in the cafés and restaurants: "Das mit der Vielsprachigkeit machte er sich leicht, er sprach nämlich überhaupt nichts, nur Worte wie bitte, danke, jawohl, gewiß, hallo und ähnliche, die er allerdings in mehreren Sprachen konnte. Nein, er sprach nichts, der Señor Pablo, und er schien auch nicht eben viel zu denken, dieser hübsche Caballero" (pp. 150-51).

What could one expect from a saxophone player! Harry really did not like him from the beginning, and he despised jazz, but he thought he ought to be polite and talk to him. So he began with what he hoped would be a meeting of the minds, a nice intellectual discussion of music:

Ich sprach mit ihm über sein Instrument und über Klangfarben in der Jazzmusik, er mußte sehen, daß er es mit einem alten Genießer und Kenner in musikalischen Dingen zu tun habe. Aber darauf ging er gar nicht ein, und während ich, aus Höflichkeit gegen ihn oder eigentlich gegen Hermine, etwas wie eine musiktheoretische Rechtfertigung des Jazz unternahm, lächelte er harmlos an mir und meinen Anstrengungen vorüber, und vermutlich war es ihm völlig unbekannt, daß es vor und außer Jazz auch noch einige andere Musik gegeben habe. (pp. 151-52)

Pablo is a *Naturmensch*, and he is completely uninterested in Harry's long-winded academic opinions. What counts is not musical theories, or even value judgments, but making music. It is only when music is played that it does any good. Pablo knows that his listeners are just as happy with their jazz as Harry with his Bach and Mozart.

Pablo, Maria, and Hermine represent *Natur* and the Dionysian elements of life. They are completely absorbed in sensual delights, and even earn their livings by providing them for others. As Harry's other self, Hermine is closest to him. She may not share his interest in philosophy, literature, and music, but she understands the problems that have tormented him. She knows that he was ready to suffer in order to achieve the great and the eternal. The fact that she knows the surface of life so well does not mean that she is content with it. Has

she`not felt that she herself could have accomplished great things? Has she not been driven to the demimonde by the same frustration that has brought Harry Haller into it?

Hermine can even understand Haller's violent feelings about the picture of Goethe, for that is just how she feels about some of the stupid, insensitive representations of her favorite saints. It is worth noting, by the way, that one of her favorites is St. Francis, a saint for whom Hesse himself has confessed admiration. Thus the circle is completed, and Hesse, Hermine, and Harry Haller are linked once more.

It is her ability to live in the present and enjoy the passing moment that really forms Hermine's greatest skill. She understands Harry's yearnings and aspirations, but she wants him to learn that human capabilities are not always equal to the rigorous demands of the spirit, that human efforts are not always sufficient to achieve ideals. Thus she sympathizes with Haller's pacifism, although she knows that "Der Kampf gegen den Tod . . . ist immer eine schöne, edle, wunderbare und ehrwürdige Sache, also auch der Kampf gegen den Krieg. Aber er ist auch immer eine hoffnungslose Donquichotterie" (pp. 142-43). But Hermine has the courage that Harry lacks, and she tries to persuade him to see that

Dein Leben wird auch dadurch nicht flach und dumm, wenn du weißt, daß dein Kampf erfolglos sein wird. Es ist viel flacher, Harry, wenn du für etwas Gutes und Ideales kämpfst und nun meinst, du müsstest es auch erreichen. Sind denn Ideale zum Erreichen da? Leben wir denn, wir Menschen, um den Tod abzuschaffen? Nein, wir leben, um ihn zu fürchten und dann wieder zu lieben, und gerade seinetwegen glüht das bißchen Leben manchmal eine Stunde lang so schön. (p. 143)

For all her acquaintance with the life in the bars and the cafés, Hermine is lonely, too, and longs for Harry's knowledge of the spirit and of the profundities of life. Thus she makes him a promise:

"Ich werde dich lehren, zu tanzen und zu spielen und zu lächeln und doch nicht zufrieden zu sein. Und werde von dir lernen, zu denken und zu wissen und doch nicht zufrieden zu sein. Weißt du, daß wir beide Kinder des Teufels sind?"— "Ja, das sind wir. Der Teufel ist der Geist, und seine unglücklichen Kinder sind wir. Wir sind aus der Natur herausgefallen und hängen im Leeren." (pp. 154-55)

The identification of Hermine with Harry's other self goes beyond her boyish face, her resemblance to Harry's childhood friend, or her sympathy with his ideas; it extends even to her hermaphroditic charms. When finally he finds her at the dance, she is dressed as a man. She has been conquering the ladies. The close bond between them is revealed in her warning that "verstehen, Freund, so wie ich dich verstehe, wird Maria dich nie und keine andere" (p. 184). But when Haller realizes that she is like a mother to him, he conjures up one of the most powerful Nature symbols in Hesse's life and work. Here we stand at the threshold of the subconscious, at the entrance to the world of the Mother. This atmosphere of sexual ambiguity recalls the situa-

tion in Demian, where the image Sinclair draws resembles both his friend Max Demian and his own mother, but finally turns out to be a picture of Demian's mother, with whom Sinclair falls in love.

Harry is an educated man, or so he believes, but it is clear to Hermine that he has not been educated for life. What sort of education is it that teaches you all the complicated things and skips the simple ones? He has never even learned how to dance! With Hermine as his teacher, Harry fills this gap in his education, and even learns to yield to the sensual appeal of jazz. At last he is ready for the bacchanal, where he loses himself among the intoxicated crowds. "Ich war nicht mehr ich," he says, "meine Persönlichkeit war aufgelöst im Festrausch wie Salz im Wasser" (p. 217). Hermine and Pablo arrange his entry into the strange world of magic mirrors. Here he beholds the brilliant and confusing display of all the fragments of his self. Even time disappears, and he can go backward or forward. He meets Goethe and Mozart, takes part in a fantastic war against the machines. One door after another is opened into his soul.

When he comes upon the nude, sleeping figures of Pablo and Hermine, he stabs her, kills the woman who meant most to him before he can possess her. Mozart appears and rebukes him. There is a trial, Harry Haller is found guilty and condemned, not to die, but to live. Suddenly Mozart becomes Pablo, in whom Haller recognizes the man who taught him that the components of his personality could be rearranged like the figures in a game of chess. In Pablo's wonderful magic theater, and not as in life, Harry Haller gets another chance, and he is ready to begin all over again. But there is hope that his experience has done him some good.

Hesse gives us no formal solution to the problem in *Steppenwolf*. If there is one at all, we should have to look in other books, in *Siddhartha*, perhaps, and certainly in *Das Glasperlenspiel*. But Hesse does give us a way out, a *modus vivendi*. It is humor, a quality that Haller, like so many other intellectuals, conspicuously lacks. Humor is "vielleicht die eigene und genialste Leistung des Menschentums" (p. 19). That is why Harry hears the clear, radiant laughter of the immortals during his last dance with Hermine. It is an introduction to their world. Harry must learn not to take everything so seriously.

Pablo tells him that in order to gain anything from the magic theater he must be in a good mood: "Sie sind hier in einer Schule des Humors, Sie sollen lachen lernen. Nun, aller höhere Humor fängt damit an, daß man die eigene Person nicht mehr ernst nimmt" (p. 229). It is when he laughs that Harry finally succeeds in splitting his personality into its component parts. That is the way to kill the Steppenwolf and to end the tormenting conflict.

This may sound like a rather simple solution, the sort of thing any genial *Spießbürger* might think of himself. Hesse is not unaware of this:

Der Humor bleibt stets irgendwie bürgerlich, obwohl der echte Bürger unfähig ist, ihn zu verstehen. In seiner imaginären Sphäre wird das verzwickte, vielsältige Ideal aller Steppenwölfe verwirklicht: hier ist es möglich, nicht nur gleichzeitig den Heiligen und den Wüstling zu bejahen, die Pole zueinander zubiegen, sondern auch noch den Bürger in die Bejahrung einzubeziehen. (p. 19)

Yet Hesse goes beyond an ordinary middle-of-the-road philosophy. There is no room here to discuss Hesse's cosmology, but there is more to it than merely recognizing all one's various selves and bringing them into a harmonious whole. The intellectual must learn to appreciate the reality behind the appearances of modern life. He must follow Mozart's advice to Harry: "Lernen Sie ernstnehmen, was des Ernstnehmens wert ist, und lachen über das andre!" (p. 282). In an amusing scene, Mozart plugs in a radio and explains to Harry that no matter how this modern mechanical contraption may squeak or squawk, no matter how much it may distort great music, it cannot destroy its original spirit.

In Pablo's kaleidoscope of make-believe, Harry has not really killed anyone, of course, but he has found himself and saved himself. That is why *Der Steppenwolf* does not seem to me to be a story of the disintegration of the Western intellectual, or of a schizophrenic. It is a tragic story, to be sure. It tells what happens when the intellectual becomes isolated from the society which gave him birth and from which he derives his support. And here it might be well to add a word of caution against taking Hesse too literally. As in Goethe's work, there is more *Dichtung* than *Wahrheit*. In the new edition of his book, published in 1942, Hesse warns his readers against the danger of identifying themselves completely with the Steppenwolf.<sup>7</sup> He neither believes that the intellectual must end in blind despair, nor has he written off the middle class.

At the very beginning of the novel, he warns us that "Auch wer keinen Wolf in sich hat, braucht darum nicht glücklich zu sein" (p. 3). And at the end, from the wild performances in the magic theater, we learn that whether the man is complete master of the wolf, or the wolf of the man, the performance is unpleasant and degrading. But it is the *Steppenwölfe* who keep the middle class alive: "In der Tat beruht die vitale Kraft des Bürgertums keineswegs auf den Eigenschaften seiner normalen Mitglieder, sondern auf denen der außerdentlich zahlreichen outsiders, die es infolge der Verschwommenheit und Dehnbarkeit seiner Ideale mit zu umschließen vermag" (p. 17). Hesse himself, when he had achieved independence as an intellectual, could not deny his middle-class background and standards. How deeply he was rooted in the middle class was revealed when he attempted to justify his existence on the basis of his material success.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Richard B. Matzig, *Hermann Hesse* (Stuttgart, 1949), p. 87.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ball: "Er faßt seinen Erfolg als einen Beweis dafür auf, daß er kein Taugenichts und Schlemihl sei; gerade dies aber zu sein, war einmal sein Ideal gewesen, oder er hatte den Chamisso und den Eichendorff nie ernst genommen. Der junge Schriftsteller Hesse ist noch mit allem Für und Wider, mit seiner

If Hesse likes the middle class, in spite of its foolishness and stupidity, he certainly is not blind to the foibles and middle-class scruples of the intellectuals. The Professor, for example, is an intellectual too, although he is not quite the same kind of intellectual as Harry. He is never troubled by doubts and self-criticism. Unlike Harry, he never has his self-confidence shaken by the fear that he is devoted to questionable values. No, the Professor is a much more reasonable fellow, who has integrated himself into middle-class life, and does not go around carrying on conversations with an imaginary wolf. Harry envies him, for he does not reflect on the problematical nature of life, but calmly continues his mechanical routine, convinced of the importance of his work, of the scientific accumulation of knowledge, of mere knowing. The horrors of the war have left him undismayed, he still believes in progress and evolution. Even the impact of Einstein's theories on our basic ideas has not disturbed him. That, after all, is only for the mathematicians to worry about.

Since Hesse is a romantic novelist in an age dominated by Naturalism, it would be well to remember that *Der Steppenwolf* is a portrait, but not a photograph of its author. Certainly Hesse himself has humor enough. It reappears in the novel again and again, in every form from comedy of situation to the most delicate irony. The temptation to quote is almost overwhelming, for Hesse is a master of style, with a sure, yet flexible, control of the language. This is immediately evident from only a cursory examination of the sections of the book. There is the calm sobriety of the introduction, the cool authority of the "Tractat," and the turbulent emotional whirlpools of the bacchanal and the magic theater. This novel is more than a product of Expressionism.

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ganzen Lebenshaltung an die Beurteilung durch Eltern und Verwandte gebunden. Es gefällt ihm, denen zu Haus bewiesen zu haben, daß auch die Schriftstellerei einen goldenen Boden haben kann . . ." (p. 119).

## ONCE AGAIN: KAFKA'S "A REPORT TO AN ACADEMY"

By ROBERT KAUF

William C. Rubinsteins article, "Franz Kafka's 'A Report to an Academy'" (*MLQ*, XIII [1952], 372-76), is to be heartily applauded. Taken as a whole, this interpretation of the work as dealing with the problem of European Jewry is unassailable. The objections which I shall raise pertain only to some specific details and to the hesitation with which it is put forward. It is my intention to help confirm Mr. Rubinsteins hypothesis by citing additional evidence in its favor.

Prior to the appearance of Mr. Rubinsteins article, the present writer and a colleague of his had both independently arrived at interpretations very similar to that of Mr. Rubinsteins. This fact may serve to indicate that Mr. Rubinsteins is by no means far-fetched. There remains, however, the mystery of how and why his, and our, explanation should not have occurred to the Kafka critics. Thus—to mention just a few examples in addition to those cited by Mr. Rubinsteins—John Urzidil in an essay published in Angel Flores' anthology *The Kafka Problem* lists a number of Kafka short stories dealing with Jewish topics but does not include "A Report" among them. Some of the other contributors to the anthology discuss "A Report" without, however, making mention of its specific Jewish connotation.<sup>1</sup> Max Brod, Kafka's personal friend, cites as proof of Kafka's positive interest in the Jewish spiritual renaissance the fact that Kafka published two short stories—"Jackals and Arabs" and "A Report"—in Martin Buber's pro-Zionist periodical *Der Jude*. At the same time, Brod does not use the content of the stories for the support of his contention.<sup>2</sup> Only Heinz Politzer, in his edition of a small volume of Kafka short stories, hints at an interpretation of the story similar to the one suggested by Mr. Rubinsteins. He writes: "Dieser Affe aus dem natürlichen Zusammenhang mit seinem Stamm und seiner Welt gerissen, erscheint zugleich als die Fratze eines Volkes, das der Anpassung verfallen seine Herkunft, seinen Sinn und sein Ziel vergessen und verraten hat. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Mr. Politzer echoes here the misgivings of National-Jewish and Zionist circles against the "evils" of the assimilation of Western Jewry. Facing the rising tide of anti-Semitism in Europe, the Zionists believed that the emancipation of the Jews and their ethnic assimilation to the nations among which they lived was doomed to failure. Instead, they called for a Jewish renaissance, for the preservation of what they considered to be the cultural and spiritual heritage

<sup>1</sup> Angel Flores, ed., *The Kafka Problem* (New York, 1946). John Urzidil, p. 285; Claude-Edmond Magny, p. 89; Egon Vietta, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> Max Brod, *Franz Kafkas Glauben und Lehre* (Winterthur, 1948), p. 72, footnote.

<sup>3</sup> Franz Kafka, *Vor dem Gesetz*, ed. Heinz Politzer (Berlin, 1934), p. 78.

of the Jewish people, and for the eventual establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Zionism as a nostalgic dream had, of course, been with the Jews ever since the beginning of the Diaspora, but as a vigorous political movement it did not emerge until the turn of the century. Then, however, it clashed with emancipationism—or assimilationism, as it was scornfully called by the Zionists. This clash took on a particularly violent character in such Jewish centers as Prague, Vienna, and Budapest, where an emancipated Western European Judaism met an Eastern European Judaism that had largely preserved its ethnic consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

Whether and to what extent Kafka identified himself with any one faction or ideology is a question still vigorously debated by Kafka specialists. However, that he did take a lively interest in Jewish problems is borne out by passages in his diaries and letters. Therefore, in treating a story apparently dealing with a Jewish topic, such as "A Report," cognizance ought to be taken of the most burning issue of Jewish life at that time; namely, the issue of emancipation versus Zionism.

Accordingly, Mr. Rubinstein's interpretation, that the ape represents only the Jew who has become a convert to Christianity for some ulterior motive, appears to me, when examined in the light of the contemporary Zionism versus assimilationism controversy, to be too narrow, and I should therefore like to suggest a broader interpretation of the ape: he is the Jew who has forgotten or forsaken his spiritual Jewish heritage, and, not because of an inner urge, but because of material considerations is attempting to be assimilated to Western culture.<sup>5</sup> The drinking of the schnapps need not then specifically stand for participation in communion, but would in a much more general

<sup>4</sup> The following passage from an article that appeared in the same volume of *Der Jude* as Kafka's "Two Animal Stories" illustrates the violence of the resentment which the Zionists harbored against the assimilationists, a resentment which far surpassed that borne against those who had left Judaism completely: "Der Deutsche jüdischer Abstammung ist ein Verlust für die Judenheit. . . . Der Assimilant aber ist nicht nur für die Judenheit ein gleicher Verlust, er ist auch unter Umständen für das Deutschtum und auf alle Fälle für die Menschheit ein Schädling. Denn er kann kein Mensch, kein einheitliches, innerlich ruhiges, gestaltendes und gestaltetes Geistwesen werden. . . . Karl Sternheim hat den Snob gezeichnet, den begabten und hoffnungsvollen Mann, der durch persönliche Tüchtigkeit in eine höhere Gesellschaftsschicht aufgestiegen ist, nun aber von dem einzigen Willen und Streben beherrscht wird, von deren Gliedern als Alteingewurzelter betrachtet zu werden und noch in die höchste Schicht aufzurücken. . . . Ein Unruhiges, Verzerrtes, Lügnerisches ist in ihnen allen, schwach genug, um von ihnen selbst oft übersehen zu werden, hinreichend stark, um sie am reinen Menschsein zu verhindern. (Um nicht mißverstanden zu werden, sei noch einmal gesagt, all das gilt nicht für jene, die Deutsche sind oder wurden, bei denen der Widerspruch zwischen psychophysischer Natur und deren Ausdruck nicht besteht. Freilich sind deren nicht allzu viele.) Sie haben den ewigen Faden der geistigen und sittlichen Kontinuität abgerissen." Siegfried Bernfeld, "Die Assimilation um der Menschheit willen," *Der Jude*, II (1917-1918), 44.

<sup>5</sup> Kafka stresses the fact that the ape is attempting to assimilate for base materialistic reasons only: the ape mentions several times in the course of his account that he did not find the human world particularly attractive, but that he had decided to become a member of it anyway since, aside from the road to

way signify the assimilationist's acceptance of extraneous, non-Jewish values. This interpretation of the schnapps drinking is plausible if one keeps in mind that excessive drinking and inebriety are noticeably uncommon among unassimilated Jews.<sup>8</sup> My broader interpretation of the schnapps-drinking episode would overcome certain difficulties which a narrower interpretation (schnapps drinking=communion) presents. The principal difficulty that comes to mind is: if Kafka specifically wanted to picture conversion, why should he have allegorized the act of communion rather than that of baptism, the religious ritual immediately associated with conversion?

There are additional difficulties. To be sure, the ape drinks the schnapps during a celebration of some kind, but how—if the schnapps drinking denotes the act of communion—are we to account for the fact that the ape, *momentarily unobserved*, reaches for the bottle which had been left standing in front of his cage *inadvertently*?<sup>9</sup> And how would we explain the relapses into the old apishness after so definitive an act as taking the communion? The ape himself does not think of the schnapps drinking in terms of an event of extraordinary importance but rather of just another stage on his way: "Auch war mit jenem Sieg noch wenig getan. Die Stimme versagte mir sofort wieder; stellte sich erst nach Monaten ein; der Widerwille gegen die Schnapsflasche kam sogar noch verstärkter."<sup>10</sup> By means of a broader interpretation of the schnapps-drinking episode, these difficulties would be overcome. Thus, if we consider the schnapps drinking as indicative of a new attitude, a new *course*, as the words of the ape himself seem to imply,<sup>9</sup> rather than as indicative of the specific act of communion, the relapse into the old ways becomes much less surprising. Also the ape's taking of the bottle while no one is watching can then be explained simply as the Jew's starting out on the road of assimilation when no one is paying close attention, while resisting it under the duress of torture. (Cf. the lighted pipe with which the teacher tortures the ape.<sup>10</sup>)

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freedom, which he did not want to take, this was the only way out of the cage. It is thus not an assimilationism based on inner convictions that is lampooned here, but an assimilationism based on a materialistic opportunism and on the refusal to accept one's spiritual destiny.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. "Abstinenz," *Jüdisches Lexikon* (Berlin, 1927), I, 55: "bis in die jüngste Gegenwart blieb die Mäßigkeit und Nüchternheit der Juden eine streng bewahrte Tugend, die sich auch in Gegenden, wo die Wirtschaftsvoélker dem Alkoholismus ergeben waren, erhielt. . . . Mit der zunehmenden Assimilation schwindet die Enthaltsamkeit der Juden in bezug auf Alkoholismus immer mehr."

<sup>7</sup> ". . . als ich an diesem Abend, gerade unbeachtet, eine vor meinem Käfig versehentlich stehengelassene Schnapsflasche ergriff. . ." Franz Kafka, *Erzählungen und kleine Prosa* (Berlin, 1935), p. 175.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>9</sup> "Aber meine Richtung allerdings war mir ein für allemal gegeben." *Idem*; italics mine.

<sup>10</sup> Mr. Rubinstein's tentatively advanced interpretation of the ape's five teachers as the four apostles (does Mr. Rubinstein mean the four evangelists?) and Paul becomes unsustainable in an interpretation of the ape as an assimilated rather than as a converted Jew. Perhaps the ape's simultaneous employment of five teachers simply illustrates the tremendous effort made by the Jews to catch up with European culture once the gates of the ghetto had been opened. To quote

Since Mr. Rubinstein asserts that he is putting forward his interpretation merely as a tentative suggestion, it is hoped that he will not object to my modification, which is one of quantity rather than of quality, and the correctness of which I have attempted to support both by citing internal evidence and by making reference to the historical-cultural background of Kafka's times. Having thus stated my reservation, I can now present additional evidence in favor of the correctness of Mr. Rubinstein's general contentions.

One such rather striking piece of evidence is furnished by the two opening paragraphs of "A Report." By changing a few words, namely, "äffisch" to "jüdisch," "Affentum" to "Judentum," and "Affe" to "Jude," one obtains the statement of a person pertly bragging to the assembled members of the academy about his "achievements," which he attributes largely to his successful emancipation from Judaism. Kafka here, and throughout the rest of the story, recaptures admirably the pretentious preciosity and the overcarefulness of style characteristic of a parvenu to Western culture, pleased with, but not yet quite sure of, himself.

Another significant passage is the one dealing with the ape's scars, particularly the second one: "Der zweite Schuß traf mich unterhalb der Hüfte . . . er hat es verschuldet, daß ich noch heute ein wenig hinke."<sup>11</sup> Goodman interprets this to mean that the ape, by accepting castration, becomes a conscious ego.<sup>12</sup> I am certain that we need not trouble Mr. Freud for an understanding of this passage. There is a much simpler explanation for it: the allusion is, of course, to the biblical account of the patriarch Jacob's struggle with the angel, in which Jacob prevails, and forces the angel to bless him. He receives from the angel the name Israel, whence his descendants, the children of Israel, derive their name. But "the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him," and "as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh."<sup>13</sup> Thus there is a double reference to the biblical account in Kafka's story: the wounding in the hip region and the limp resulting from it. There can, therefore, be little doubt that the ape is meant to represent a descendant of Jacob-Israel.

But the ape, we must remember, is to Kafka only a caricature of the true, ideal concept of the descendant of Jacob-Israel. He has lost

the ape: "Durch eine Anstrengung, die sich bisher auf der Erde nicht wiederholt hat, habe ich die Durchschnittsbildung eines Europäers erreicht." *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Goodman, *Kafka's Prayer* (New York, 1947), p. 146.

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 32:24-32. In the English translation of "A Report" the allusion is somewhat obscured since the ape is wounded "below the hip" and "limps" while the King James version has "the hollow of Jacob's thigh" touched, and has Jacob-Israel "halt upon his thigh." In the original German, Kafka's "Der zweite Schuß traf mich unterhalb der Hüfte . . . er hat es verschuldet, daß ich noch heute ein wenig *hinke*" (italics mine), preserves the biblical "und das Gelenk seiner Hüfte ward über dem Ringen mit ihm verrenkt . . . und er hinkte an seiner Hüfte."

all real understanding for his religious heritage and destiny, and it is therefore not surprising that the account of his wounding reads like a travesty on the Bible story. The biblical Jacob is alone when he wrestles with the angel; the ape is one of a herd. Jacob is maimed in a hand-to-hand combat; the ape is hit from a distant ambush. The angel wrestles with Jacob *qua* Jacob; the hunting expedition fires *not* at Kafka's ape, but at the herd: the ape is hit anonymously and by accident. Jacob is crippled in a religious encounter; the ape, while running to satisfy a material desire for drink. Jacob's wound is God-inflicted; the ape's is man-inflicted. Jacob-Israel leaves the encounter blessed; the ape is captured.

As might be expected, the general attitude of the ape with regard to the wounding in the hip region stands in marked contrast to the attitude exhibited by the true children of Jacob-Israel. The latter "eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank."<sup>14</sup> Thus the true children of Israel remember with reverence, in a sacramental, ritualistic manner, what happened to their patriarch. They have established a sacred taboo that carries within it the elements of self-denial, ascetic resignation, and a sort of concealment, a passing over in silence.

How does the ape react? To him the scar carries no sacred connotation, but—as the symbolic mark of his Judaism—is a nuisance, the result of a "wanton shot." Yet, he is too much of an exhibitionist to be able to resist the urge of showing off his differentness. He therefore displays in a loud, brazen, and coarse manner the scar together with that part of the body which, according to a social taboo, is usually covered. It is ironic that this tasteless act of exhibitionism should be singled out by one of the ten thousand windbags who write in the newspapers about the ape (obviously the anti-Semitic journalists) as a sign of an apish (=Jewish) residue in the ape's otherwise emancipated character; for actually this sort of conduct, as we have seen, is in sharp contrast to the behavior of the true children of Israel.

In addition to the one shot into the hip, the ape receives another one into the face, which leaves behind a big, red, visible scar, to which an entire paragraph is devoted in the story. I feel that a definite significance attaches to this scar, but must admit that I am at a loss as to a satisfactory explanation.

The other main points of "A Report" have been treated so well by Mr. Rubinstein in his article that there is no need to repeat them. With the main points thus interpreted, minor points become practically self-explanatory.<sup>15</sup> Attention should perhaps be called only to one

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 32:33.

<sup>15</sup> For example, such episodes as the ape's expert handling of the pipe a long time before he knows the most important thing about it: the difference between an empty and a filled pipe. This brings to mind a person's outward adherence to mores before he has grasped their inner significance.

There exists, of course, always the danger in the interpretation of a symbolical

minor matter where the English translation of necessity tends to blur the allusion: when the ape becomes fascinated by his keeper's drinking of the schnapps, he pollutes his cage. The original German reads: "[ich] verunreinige mich in meinem Käfig" (p. 174). The terms "rein" and "unrein" ("clean" and "unclean") are used in the Old Testament in connection with ritual observances. Thus, the pollution ("making impure") probably signifies the initial break with the Jewish traditional law and the beginning of a life of "uncleanliness."

In his article, Mr. Rubinstein mentions that "A Report" first appeared in *Der Jude*, a monthly magazine conceived and published by Martin Buber, which, as Mr. Rubinstein writes, "dealt exclusively with Jewish problems." Mr. Rubinstein further states: "the appearance of 'A Report to an Academy' in *Der Jude* does add, however little, to the probability that the story dealt with the problems of European Jewry." Again I agree heartily with Mr. Rubinstein while, at the same time, I feel that he is too modest in making this claim; for first, Buber, a person of great seriousness of purpose, is not very likely to have published anything irrelevant to the aims of his journal, and secondly, *Der Jude* seems to have paid particular attention to that very aspect of Jewish life which I believe "A Report" treats; namely, the problem of assimilation and emancipation. In its 1917-1918 volume, the magazine carried numerous articles dealing with this topic. The April-May issue of 1917 alone carries three such major essays.<sup>10</sup> Thus "A Report," interpreted along the lines suggested, fitted very well into the general tenor of the periodical, and its readers, preoccupied with the assimilation problem, in all likelihood had no difficulty in grasping the allegory in Kafka's fable, particularly since Kafka's ape had so many characteristics in common with the Zionist conception of the assimilationist.<sup>11</sup>

As Mr. Rubinstein points out, "A Report" was published in *Der Jude* as the second of two stories under the common heading "Two Animal Stories." The first of these was "Jackals and Arabs."<sup>12</sup> Since both stories appeared under one heading, one is justified in looking for a thematic relationship between the two. Thus, if a relationship between "A Report to an Academy," interpreted along the lines suggested by us, and "Jackals and Arabs" can be shown to exist, it may serve as an additional indication for the correctness of our analysis.

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or allegorical story that one tries to read too much into it. Some of the details may serve no other purpose but that of embellishment or of adding to the atmosphere. Others may owe their origin to whimsy. Of the latter type is perhaps the remark, made in "A Report," that apes think with their bellies, a distorted reminiscence perhaps of the habits of the ancient Homeric gods and heroes, who—as every Austrian "Gymnasiast" knew—think with their diaphragms.

<sup>10</sup> Arnold Zweig, "Jude und Europäer," pp. 21-28; Raphael Seligmann, "Gedanken über die Emanzipation," pp. 28-32; Siegfried Bernfeld, "Assimilation um der Menschheit willen," pp. 32-47.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. quotation in note 4 above. The picture of the assimilationist drawn there by Mr. Bernfeld almost completely fits the character of Kafka's ape.

<sup>12</sup> Kafka, *Erzählungen und kleine Prosa*, pp. 146-50.

In order to show such a relationship I shall now attempt a very brief interpretation of "Jackals and Arabs."

The clue to the significance of "Jackals and Arabs" lies in the fate of the jackals: they have been dispersed among the hated Arabs. Forced to lead the lowly life of scavengers, they have also become used to a scavenger morality: they consider the eating of cadavers as clean, and the eating of the flesh of slaughtered animals as unclean. Since they have lost the will to act for themselves, they can only hope longingly for a savior, a messiah, to liberate them from their miserable existence. In this hope, however, they are always thwarted. The similarity of the fate of the jackals to that of the Jews is fairly obvious; and so is the satire. It is directed against those Jews who would continue to live an undignified life and passively await liberation by a messiah or by some other outside power, rather than act for themselves.<sup>10</sup>

Thus it appears that there is a definite relationship between the "Two Animal Stories," provided the ape is interpreted along the lines we suggest. In both stories Kafka brands what he considers Jewish heresies and vices of his time. In "Jackals and Arabs" he castigates a passivity and inertia, which uses for its excuse false messianic hopes. In "A Report to an Academy" he attacks that type of assimilationism which, based upon opportunism, sacrifices a spiritual heritage and destiny to a crude materialism.

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<sup>10</sup> John Urzidil, too, lists "Jackals and Arabs" as a story dealing with a Jewish topic; *A Kafka Anthology*, p. 285. If we attempt to make our interpretation more specific, certain difficulties seem to arise, since two possibilities suggest themselves, of which neither is wholly satisfactory: (a) The Arabs represent the non-Jewish world; the jackals represent orthodox (?), non-Zionist Jews, who prefer waiting for the messiah to self-liberation. (b) The Arabs represent the Zionists; the jackals, the assimilationists. The latter view would explain why Kafka stresses the fact that the narrator of the story, on whom the jackals pin all their hope, is a European. Other points, however, such as the throwing of the cadaver to the jackals by the Arabs, would lend themselves more readily to an explanation if (a) were adopted.

The following quotation from Raphael Seligmann's "Gedanken über die Emanzipation" (*Der Jude*, II, 31-32) sounds almost like a commentary on "Jackals and Arabs": "Der Glaube an den erlösenden Messias gehört gewiß zu den wertvollsten Inspirationen der jüdischen Psyche, allein der Aberglaube an den Helfer von außen her ist für uns immer irreführend und verderbend gewesen. Gewiß: hätten wir nicht unter dem hypnotischen Einflusse von autoritären Machtprüchen, Bedingungen und Verpflichtungen gelebt, wir hätten unser nationales Dasein kaum erhalten können. Das steht fest. Wir hätten aber auch nicht die namenlose Schmach erlebt, tief entehrnde Bedingungen seitens unserer Umwelt willig über uns ergehen zu lassen. Hätten wir nicht in unseren historischen Zeiten unter dem Einflusse unserer geistigen Autoritäten den Verzicht auf unser politisches Dasein geleistet, so waren wir längst aus der Liste der Lebenden gestrichen, aber wir wären gleichfalls nicht dazu gekommen, unserer Nationalität leichten Herzens den Rücken zu kehren. . . . Wir blicken noch immer auf—wenn nicht zu Göttern, Fürstern und Parlamenten, so doch zu Kongressen und Konferenzen, von wo aus wir unser nationales Heil erwarten. Die Wirklichkeit wird uns bittere Enttäuschungen bereiten, wie sie sie uns bisher bereitete."

## GOETHE AND THE EDGEWORTHS

By JOHN HENNIG

In my note on "Two Irish Bulls in Kant's *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*" (*MLQ*, VIII [1947], 487-88) I mentioned Goethe's letter to Zelter of March 4, 1829:

Das höchst artige Geschichtchen von dem Diener, der im Kopfe nicht zusammenfinden konnte, daß heißes und kaltes Wasser laues hervorbringen, kommt mir gerade zur rechten Zeit. Es hat etwas Ähnliches von den *Irish Bulls*, die aus einer wunderbaren Unbehülflichkeit des Geistes hervorkommen, und worüber im psychologischen Sinne gar manches zu sagen ist. Hier etwa dergleichen: "Ein Irländer liegt im Bett; man stürmt herein und ruft: rettet euch, das Haus brennt! Wie so? erwidert er, ich wohne ja zur Miethe hier!"

Zelter answered on March 19: "Dein Irish Bull ist so viel werth als meine Geschichte; er war mir in anderer Gestalt etwas bekannt, wiewohl er so am besten ist." Küttnner, whom Goethe knew, had referred to Irish bulls and blunders in connection with his criticism of traditional British contempt of Ireland.<sup>1</sup> Goethe's reference to Irish bulls and their origin in an "Unbehülflichkeit des Geistes" rather points to an influence of Wilhelm Grimm's review of Croker's *Fairy Legends in the Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, January 12, 1826, where the "unübersetzbaren Bulls" were attributed to "eine gewisse, dem Irländer angeborene Beschränkung des Verstandes."<sup>2</sup> In Georg Depping's book on Ireland (Pesth, 1828), p. 33 (which may be the "neu eingelangte Werk über Irland" on which, according to Goethe's diary, Ottolie reported on January 1, 1832<sup>3</sup>), it was stated that Irish bulls are a source of constant amusement to the English although they "entschlüpfen allen Völkern, die schneller mit dem Antworten als Nachdenken sind, und beweisen eigentlich nichts gegen die natürlichen Anlagen." After the publication in 1802 of Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth's *Essay on Irish Bulls*, probably no Continental author wrote on this subject without being influenced by that work.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Briefe über Irland* (Leipzig, 1785), pp. 211 ff., with two examples, neither of which is the bull told by Goethe. For Küttnner see Goethe's diary May 7, 1798, and May 5, 1800.

<sup>2</sup> See my paper "The Brothers Grimm and T. C. Croker," *MLR*, XLI (1946), 45.

<sup>3</sup> In the same year, Brockhaus' *Conversationslexikon* published an article of more than a page surveying the literary qualities of Maria Edgeworth and her father. Maria's character is summed up as follows: "Common sense, scharfe Beobachtung der Beweggründe menschlicher Handlungen, Mannichfältigkeit, Feinheit, wenn auch nicht Tiefe der Charakteristik, männliches Urtheilsvermögen verbunden mit weiblichem Takt und klare leichte Darstellung." Brockhaus' *Allgemeine Real-Encyclopädie*, 7th edition (1827), the predecessor of that work, had an article on the "Abbé Edgeworth, geboren in Irland aus dem Flecken Edgeworth-Town."

<sup>4</sup> Joseph d'Avèze, the editor of *Revue Britannique*, in his *Tour en Irlande* in 1843/44 (Paris, 1846), p. 115, speaks of *Essay on Irish Bulls* as a work by Maria Edgeworth "vante de tous côtés," adding his own explanation of bulls.

Still it is remarkable that while "the Edgeworths ransacked all literature, one may say, ancient and modern, for examples of bulls,"<sup>5</sup> what Goethe quotes as an Irish bull is not found in their essay. However, Goethe adopted the chief theory of that essay, that bulls are not peculiar to the Irish.

In his book on *Goethe's Knowledge of English Literature*, Professor James Boyd did not mention that the reference which Goethe made in his agenda of November, 1813, to his reading of a novel by "M. Owenson" (the earliest of his many references to Lady Morgan) is preceded by a reference to "Roman der M. Edgeworth."<sup>6</sup> This is the only known direct reference made by Goethe to Maria Edgeworth, and it is remarkable that Goethe placed together the names of the two prominent Irish woman-writers of his time.

We know just as little about which of Maria Edgeworth's novels then published Goethe refers to<sup>7</sup> as we do about which of Lady Morgan's novels is the subject of that entry in his agenda. Goethe may have read in Hüttner's *Englische Miscellen*, XXII (1806), 123, the note: "Von der geistreichen Miss Edgeworth, einer der vorzüglichsten englischen Schriftstellerinnen, ein neues treffliches Werk: *Leonora*."

In consideration of the absence of further references to Maria Edgeworth, the records of Goethe's acquaintance with her half-brother Charles Sneyd Edgeworth and his wife gain in significance. Edgeworth was one of the earliest of Goethe's many Irish acquaintances,<sup>8</sup> and his references to him are among the few known descriptions of Charles Sneyd and his wife, apart from Richard Lovell Edgeworth, the father, the most important members of the family for Maria.

On September 1, 1823, Goethe entered in his diary at Carlsbad that after lunch he had "Frau von Levetzow und Ulrichen zum Schilde begleitet, die eine kranke Engländerin Edgeworth besuchten und wegen einer Cammerjungfer verhandelten. Entwicklung des englischen Charakters." While Frau v. Levetzow and Ulrike called at the hotel, Goethe stayed with the two younger Levetzow girls "erst auf der Brücke, dann auf der Wiese." This was an important moment in Goethe's relations with the v. Levetzows. Ulrike had just given a polite refusal to Goethe, who had proposed to her, though he was fifty-five years her elder. On September 5, on his return to Weimar, Goethe would write the epilogue of this relationship, erroneously known as the *Marienbader Elegie*.

<sup>5</sup> G. R. Neilson's introduction to his edition (London, 1898), p. vi. In Neilson's catalogue of latter-day bulls, this bull is not found either.

<sup>6</sup> (Oxford, 1932), p. 275.

<sup>7</sup> The only study exclusively devoted to Maria Edgeworth's Irish novels has been the Koenigsberg, 1918, thesis by Friedrich Michael with the subtitle "Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des ethnographischen Romans in England."

<sup>8</sup> The present note is a further addition to my survey of Goethe's personal relations with Ireland in *Dublin Magazine*, January-March, 1943; see below notes 26 and 27.

The entry made in Goethe's diary for September 2: "Fortgesetzte lästige Geschichte der Engländer. Anmaßlichkeit und Pracherey" apparently refers to the Edgeworths. In the last letter which Goethe wrote in 1823, addressed to Frau v. Levetzow, he said:

Daß H. Edgeworth auch uns mit einem Besuche beglückte, haben Sie aus dem eingeschobenen Billet<sup>10</sup> gesehen. Er zeigte sich aber sonst zuvorkommend, unterrichtet so gar angenehm, nur mit der Cammerjungfer, zuletzt auch mit dem Kutscher wollte es nicht in Ordnung kommen.

In his diary for October 29, Goethe had mentioned the visit of "*Mr. C. Sneyd Edgeworth*" [these words in italics, as in other instances probably copied from the call-card], den ich in Carlsbad kennen lernte." Edgeworth called while Kanzler v. Müller was still with Goethe. For lunch, Goethe had on that day among others "den jungen Engländer," but this was apparently Johnston,<sup>11</sup> whom on the previous day "der Engländer Brouhton" had presented to Goethe as "einen neuen Ankömmling," rather than Edgeworth who was then thirty-seven years of age. Did v. Müller refer also to the Edgeworths when on October 31 he was at Goethe's house "Verhältnisse zu Engländern erwähnend und erzählend"?

What we can gather from Goethe's references to Edgeworth is that to Goethe and the Levetzows his visits appeared as a mixed blessing, mainly owing to Edgeworth's conceit, which may also account for his difficulties with his (Continental?) staff. Apart from Sterling, who in the autumn of 1823 arrived at Weimar with a letter from Byron, Edgeworth was the first Irishman whom we can trace among the many visitors from the British Isles in Goethe's house. That Goethe always referred to the Edgeworths as "Engländer" is not surprising, because he did not always clearly distinguish the Irish among his English-speaking visitors and because Sneyd Edgeworth was actually more English than Irish by descent, and his wife was English.

Since there appears to exist no concise account of Sneyd Edgeworth, the following data might illustrate the background of Goethe's acquaintance with him. While Maria was the second (and after the death of her brother, the oldest and only) child from the first marriage of Richard Lovell, Charles was the fourth child from the third marriage, with Elizabeth Sneyd from Lichfield, the sister of Richard Lovell's second wife.<sup>12</sup> Charles Sneyd was born in 1786.<sup>13</sup>

In his youth he was a lively and cheerful child, a brick in the entertainments arranged by Maria in the family circle. Like his brothers

<sup>9</sup> A Southern German word for "boastfulness." This seems to be the only instance where Goethe used the noun. See P. Fischer, *Goethes Wortschatz* (Leipzig, 1929).

<sup>10</sup> Probably in Goethe's letter to the Countess of November 29.

<sup>11</sup> See *Tagebücher* (Weimar-edition), index, XIV, 44.

<sup>12</sup> E. Lawless, *Maria Edgeworth* (London, 1904), pp. 26 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Burke's *Landed Gentry of Ireland* (1912).

and sisters he was educated by his father.<sup>14</sup> In July, 1804, he entered Trinity College, Dublin.<sup>15</sup> In a letter to the College, Maria tells him in February, 1805: "We missed you very much, my dear Sneyd," and a few months later, she described him as "ever the promoter of gaiety."<sup>16</sup> Already during his student years, Sneyd had made the acquaintance of Miss Henrica Broadhurst, daughter of John Broadhurst of Foston Hall, Derby, then in Dublin (by a coincidence a character in Maria's *Absentee* is called Miss Broadhurst). When meeting her a few years later at Derby, Maria was so favourably impressed with her that she was delighted when Sneyd announced his engagement. Henrica, Maria wrote, "is so kind, so well-bred and easy in her manner."<sup>17</sup>

Henrica and Charles Sneyd Edgeworth set up home in 1813 at No. 15 Baggot Street, Dublin. After the death of Richard Lovell Edgeworth and in the absence of Lovell, the eldest surviving son, the only child from the second marriage, Maria and Charles managed "with the utmost difficulties the family estate."<sup>18</sup> With her usual humbleness, Maria describes herself in her letter to Charles of February 12, 1835, as his "agent."<sup>19</sup> This letter is the most important record of the relations between Maria and Charles. Writing to "my dear and always kind brother," Maria discusses the question whether the tenants at Edgeworthstown who had been "shamefully bullied by the priests" into voting against their landlord's directions, should be punished. We do not know what opinion Charles expressed in this matter.

In 1815, Charles Sneyd published *Memoirs of the Abbé Edgeworth*; the dedication, dated London, May 1, 1815, was addressed to Louis XVIII; hence Charles Sneyd was scarcely a Liberal. "The Editor is one of the Abbé's nearest surviving relations" and "takes honest pride in claiming relationship with him," although the latter was "brought up in the Romish faith."<sup>20</sup> A French translation of Sneyd's edition of the Abbé's memoirs appeared at Paris in 1817. In the preface, dated Cork, 1817, to his edition of the *Letters from the Abbé Edgeworth to His Friends* (London, 1818), the Rev. Thomas R. England stated that Sneyd had "altered in some instances the style of the Abbé's book under the notion of amendment."

<sup>14</sup> *A Memoir of Maria Edgeworth* (London, 1867), I, 50, 66, 83, and 94.

<sup>15</sup> *Alumni Dublinenses*.

<sup>16</sup> *A Memoir*, I, 177, 186.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 270, 290, and 298.

<sup>18</sup> *The Black Book of Edgeworthstown* (London, 1928), pp. 239 f.

<sup>19</sup> *A Memoir*, III, 168.

<sup>20</sup> Pp. 135 to 139 on the Abbé's journey to Blankenberg in the Harz Mountains, where Louis XVIII lived in exile. When journeying in Switzerland in 1820, Maria Edgeworth saw a German print of Louis XVI with the "Abbé Edgewatz" (*sic*) in the background (*A Memoir*, II, 109). In her book on the Abbé, M. H. Woodgate (Dublin, 1944) mentioned that a copy of Charles Sneyd's *Memoirs*, her chief authority, with a hand-written dedication to Maria is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

In 1819, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sneyd Edgeworth went to Paris, perhaps to prepare the ground for Maria, who joined them there in the following year with her sisters Harriet and Fanny. In the autumn she met Wilhelm von Humboldt at Paris.<sup>21</sup>

There is no reference in Maria's letter of 1823 to the Sneyds' journey to Carlsbad and Weimar. In that year Maria went with her sisters to the Scotts.<sup>22</sup> In the third volume of Mrs. Edgeworth's *Memoir of Maria Edgeworth* we have a few pages from a diary letter written by Charles Sneyd from Edgeworthstown to his wife (who had stayed in Dublin) dated May 27 to June 1, 1833, including a discussion of Maria's writings and her opinions of Byron.<sup>23</sup> At Lovell's death in 1841, Charles Sneyd succeeded him. His wife died in 1846, Maria in 1849, and he himself in 1864. He left no issue.<sup>24</sup>

In Goethe's references to Charles Sneyd Edgeworth and his wife no mention is made of Maria, and there is no published record of Charles Sneyd's telling Maria of his meetings with Goethe. Describing Charles Sneyd as "engl. Edelmann aus Dublin," the index to Goethe's *Tagebücher* (Weimar-edition)<sup>25</sup> makes no reference to his relationship with Maria Edgeworth.

That Charles Sneyd was "unterrichtet," as Goethe told Frau v. Levetzow, may be ascribed to his education. However, it is unlikely that he gave Goethe much information on Ireland, a subject in which the latter subsequently became more and more interested. All of Goethe's early personal relations with Ireland were connected with Carlsbad. In 1797, Lord Bristol, Bishop of Derry, and his secretary, the Rev. Trefusis Lovell, on their journey from Carlsbad to Pyrmont, visited Goethe at Jena.<sup>26</sup> In 1810 at Carlsbad, Goethe met the Chevalier Anthony O'Hara, who subsequently resided for some time at Weimar, and the Rev. O'Kelly, an ancestor of the present president

<sup>21</sup> *A Memoir*, II, 53.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 211 ff.; also A. J. Hare, *Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth* (London, 1894), II, 93-119; this work and the other biographies of Maria Edgeworth paid no attention to the references made by Maria Edgeworth to Charles Sneyd.

<sup>23</sup> *A Memoir*, III, 79 ff.

<sup>24</sup> In the autumn of 1842, J. G. Kohl visited Edgeworthstown, a place which "received its name from the Edgeworth family—a name which the amiable authoress, Maria Edgeworth, has made celebrated throughout the whole world" (follows a brief history of the Edgeworths in Ireland with special reference to the Abbé). Kohl says that his German readers might expect from him a description of the house where Maria Edgeworth wrote her books. "But I feel an aversion to speak of those living persons who have received me under their roof" (*Ireland*, authorized English translation [London, 1844], pp. 23 f.). This seems to be the only other reference in German literature to Charles Sneyd. The earliest German translation of a work by Maria Edgeworth seems to be that of *Harry and Lucy* (not listed by Kohl) by "a lady residing at Norwich" (*A Memoir*, III, 248). In 1846, Charles Lever told Maria Edgeworth something of Germany in his letters to her from Karlsruhe (Edward Downey, *Charles Lever* [London, 1906], I, 244 f.).

<sup>25</sup> XIV, 199.

<sup>26</sup> See my article in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, X (1947), 101-109.

of Ireland.<sup>27</sup> Lord Bristol was not Irish, though he played a prominent part in Irish affairs. O'Hara was Irish only from his father's side and was born outside Ireland; still he conveyed to Goethe some important knowledge of Ireland past and present. Charles Sneyd Edgeworth appeared to Goethe scarcely different from his English wife, though what Goethe described in him as "zuvorkommend . . . so gar angenehm" may be claimed to be a trait specially characteristic of the Anglo-Irish.

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<sup>27</sup> See my article "Goethe's Friendship with Anthony O'Hara," *MLR*, XXXIX (1944), 146 ff.

## REVIEWS

*Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries.* Edited by ROSELL HOPE ROBBINS. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1952. Pp. lviii + 331. \$3.50.

Professor Robbins' edition is no ordinary anthology. Though it does not attempt to establish a canon, yet it will probably remain the definitive textual edition of most of the fifty-odd poems here printed for the first time. While in some respects it completes the Oxford University Press survey of English lyric poetry for the years 1200-1500, changes in purpose and in basis of selection make this volume differ considerably from those edited by the late Carleton Brown.

Editorial compromises, made apparently in order to serve two very different audiences, often limit the usefulness of the edition for both audiences. For the general reader, the volume is not an entirely representative selection, since it contains only a few pieces by known authors, and particularly since the already scanty production of the fourteenth century is not represented by Chaucer's lyrics. It is difficult to justify the inclusion of a few poems by other known authors "to permit a comparative survey in one volume," when no attempt has been made to illustrate for the general reader the diversity of these poets' accomplishments. Certainly Professor Robbins' statement that he has printed "all lyrics outstanding for their literary value" cannot hold good without considering the Chaucerian poems and without making a clearer distinction between the "short" 100-line poems he includes and the "long" 100-line poems he omits. On the other hand, the almost exclusive attention in the notes to bibliographical matters rather than to interpretation and clarification suggests that here the editor had in mind an audience of specialists in Middle English. The general reader will find the notes of little help in solving the cruxes of obscure syntax and cryptic meaning. If the editor is addressing the specialist, then there is no necessity for reprinting pieces already available in good modern editions. To collect poems from relatively inaccessible periodicals is more defensible, perhaps, but it would have been more helpful to the scholar had further space been devoted to secular verse as yet unprinted.

The texts seem on the whole to be accurate. I have compared twenty-six of them with my own transcriptions, and I find few points of difference. Professor Robbins retains MS capitalization for the scholar and punctuates for the general reader. He has been careful to record variants and to describe textual difficulties. There are minor inconsistencies in the expansion of contractions and abbreviations. In emending the texts, the editor does not always show restraint, although he has some moments of fine insight. The reconstruction of the scrambled text of No. 162 is well done, as are the conjectures supplied for the mutilated lines in No. 198.

One emendation ought to be challenged. No. 199, which the editor calls "To His Mistress, Fairest of Fair," deserves a different title and belongs with the group of poems in which the speaker is a woman, addressing her man. The only evidences of the sex of the speaker are in these lines (my transcription from microfilm of MS): "My truthe to you y wryte, / as she pat is with w[o] oppressed sore," and "Whan y sawe first your manhede." Professor Robbins reads "Ass he pat is," etc., and then emends *manhede* to *maidenhede*. The other

three occurrences of *as* in this text are spelled with only one *s*; the MS reads *manhode* (the editor records it in his note). Apparently he feels that the line requires the extra syllables of *maidenhede*, but this basis for emendation is very shaky in view of the other short lines in the poem and in the face of all the other evidence to the contrary. The poem is addressed by a woman to her lover.

The specialist will be pleased with the introduction; it is a sound account of bibliography and statistical information about the poems. The general reader, however, will find very little comment on the poetry as literature, even from a historical point of view. *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* is a valuable book, but could have been either a far more useful one for the scholar, or a far more interesting and representative one for the general reader. It seems to me that Professor Robbins should have chosen one audience or the other.

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*The Elizabethan Woman*. By CARROLL CAMDEN. Houston, New York, London: Elsevier Press, 1952. Pp. 333. \$4.50.

This beautifully bound volume, printed in The Netherlands on Old Dutch Vergé paper, and illustrated by some fifty woodcuts, paintings, and engravings, is a credit to the skill of the Elsevier Press.

In substance *The Elizabethan Woman* is based on exhaustive research. We read scores of statements—many of them direct quotations—concerning woman's nature and the various phases of her existence: her education, courtship, marriage, domestic duties, amusements, costumes, and cosmetics. Practically all of these statements are taken from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature, from plays, tales, and poems, as well as from diatribes, panegyrics, and manuals of advice devoted exclusively to women. Since the time span allotted by Professor Camden to the word Elizabethan is unusually long (1540-1640), and since even these generous boundaries are sometimes overstepped (one poem and illustration from a manuscript of the year 1500), it is inevitable that the material he presents will include a wide range of views. Some of these are so contradictory as completely to cancel one another; many are peculiarly applicable to the medieval woman and her problems; others are more pertinent to the Jacobean and Carolinian ladies than to those of Elizabeth's day.

While making allowances for a measure of similarity in the attitudes toward women, one wishes that Dr. Camden had more sharply emphasized those which were peculiarly Elizabethan and had devoted more time to the interpretation of his evidence. This meagreness of interpretation is perhaps the greatest weakness of the book. We wonder about the lives of actual English women, and we wonder to what extent their accomplishments and interests square with the opinions drawn from the books and pamphlets. In fact, we have a number of questions yet unanswered.

What is the significance of the term "woman" in the title? Did Dr. Camden choose that term instead of "lady" or "gentlewoman" because he wished to concentrate his attention on the middle-class woman, or because he considered the word "woman" general enough to include all classes? In either event the title is misleading for there are only a few casual allusions to middle-class women. Nowhere does the author attempt to describe the separate classes of women in English society. His center of interest is the high born, the wealthy, the privileged woman of the upper stratum of society.

Is *The Elizabethan Woman* intended for the general public or for scholars? It is difficult to decide. The illustrations, the format, and the many amusing and revealing comments quoted by Professor Camden would be of interest to the layman as well as to the scholar. On the other hand the author's frequent failure to indicate what is trivial in contrast to what is important, and to discuss the significant trend of opinion, might well result in a degree of confusion for the general reader.

Those readers more conversant with Professor Camden's subject matter may be troubled by other omissions. The purpose announced in the preface to reveal the nature of the Elizabethan woman "philosophically and actually" is not fulfilled. Clothes and cosmetics are catalogued clearly enough, but motives and interests are not sufficiently analyzed. What forces were shaping the lives of a small but influential group of upper-class English women? What effects did Italy, the learned Academies, and neo-Platonism have upon the gentlewomen of Elizabeth's day? Why were the satirical diatribes outnumbered by the fulsome panegyrics? John Llyl was not alone in his recognition of the growing importance of feminine readers. The Elizabethan woman's place in the sun is clear enough. To explain her attainment of this bright eminence will continue to command the best efforts of scholarship.

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*Backgrounds of English Literature, 1700-1760.* By CECIL A. MOORE. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1950. Pp. xi + 254. \$4.50.

Although four of the five essays that appear under this title are reprints of articles originally published in periodicals more than a quarter-century ago, it is well that we now have them conveniently accessible in a single, hard-cover volume.

Two of the studies ("Shaftesbury and the Ethical Poets in England" and "The Return to Nature in English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century") have long been recognized as important documents in effecting a significant change in the interpretation of certain aspects of the origins of English Romanticism. They have been acknowledged as such and incorporated into their respective general summations of eighteenth-century literature by literary historians Cazamian, McKillop, Sherburn, and Bredvold. It is hardly necessary here, therefore, to do more than restate Professor Moore's thesis. In the first essay he demonstrates convincingly that from the second to the last decade of the century "the adoption of Shaftesbury's ideas by popular writers in England was widespread . . . and had a large part in determining the content of English literature." In the second essay he presents more evidence to support the contention that the "new" nature poetry had its common source in the learned philosophy of the time and that it was not therefore (as some would have it) imitation of earlier literature or original in the poets themselves.

The other two reprints and the new essay which concludes this volume are similarly concerned with the sources of other romantic undercurrents of Augustan thought. "Whig Panegyric Verse: A Phase of Sentimentalism" points up interesting correspondences between the sentimental philosophy of benevolence, mercantile "liberalism," and popular poetry. The essay on John Dunton's mortuary journalism makes the provocative (but as yet not fully accepted)

suggestion that the seemingly self-conscious gloom of the graveyard poets was not a mere literary phenomenon or a psychological eccentricity but actually a reflection of "the normal and all but universal habit of mind among the pious" at that time. The new essay in the volume, "The English Malady," makes the similarly provocative suggestion that the famous melancholia of the eighteenth-century romantics—far from being the mere literary fad or psychological divergence that it is sometimes presented to be—may actually be considered as a significant index of contemporary psychology. The impressive evidence mustered here from the little-known medical literature of the time gives force to this suggestion.

All these essays are excellent examples of literary scholarship in the older, conventional sense of the term. They are solidly constructed, cautiously limited in critical commitment, and copiously documented. They are concerned with background almost exclusively as background. "With the intrinsic merit of the poetry," says Professor Moore, "I am concerned only incidentally." As a result, there is little if any qualitative distinction made between major or significant minor figures such as Pope, Swift, Thomson, Akenside, and Parnell on the one hand and dozens of poetasting hacks such as Henry Needler, James Harris, and Soame Jenyns on the other. In their relation to the general climate of ideas they are all of equal significance, and Professor Moore's concerns do not very often extend beyond the general climate.

In this last respect, as well as in certain other ways, these essays stand in sharp contrast to the rhetorically centered Augustan scholarship increasingly prevalent at the present time and currently demonstrated in the recently published studies of Professors Maynard Mack, W. K. Wimsatt, Ian Jack, J. M. Bullitt, Martin Price, and others. Comparison of this volume with any one of these later studies offers an interesting measure of how far—whether for better or worse—the pendulum has swung.

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*Bibliographical Study of William Blake's Note-Book.* By BUNSHO JUGAKU. Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1953. Pp. 175. \$5.00; 35s.

In 1935 a facsimile edition of William Blake's notebook, sometimes called the Rossetti MS, was published under the editorship of Geoffrey Keynes, with a printed transcription of its contents and a brief introduction. Now Bunshō Jugaku, already known for his Blake bibliography, provides us with a *Bibliographical Study* of the notebook. The title is perhaps misleading, for Mr. Jugaku's definition of "bibliographical study" is indeed broad. Thus he takes considerable pains to introduce us first to all historical and biographical information pertinent to Blake's creation of the document in question: a short review of the period in Blake's life during which he was filling the notebook with prose, verses, and drawings. Most of this information is not new, but until now it has not been fully developed in a single essay. In the second section of his book Mr. Jugaku provides us with a short history of the notebook from the time of Blake's death to the present. He provides us further, in section three, with a brief description of the contents of each page. Then in section four he makes what is his most original contribution to scholarship—a detailed though, as he admits, tentative dating of the entries in the notebook. He presents us with the evidence for his conclusions and a chronological arrangement of all written

material in the notebook (complete with all of Blake's corrections and deletions). The chronological arrangement takes up well over half the volume and does not differ greatly from Keynes's own arrangement in the facsimile edition. Nevertheless, Mr. Jugaku's analysis of the dates of entry is valuable, not only because it makes some minor corrections to Keynes's edition, but also because it provides the reasoning by means of which he arrives at his conclusions. Thus we are now able, as we have not been before, to evaluate the evidence for ourselves.

At times we must disagree with Mr. Jugaku's judgments. For example, he writes that Blake surely had the *Discourses* of Reynolds with him at Felpham, but "he cannot have read even one volume of them in earnest there: for, if he did, he must have denounced Reynolds in *Milton*, which was developed into definite shape during his Felpham period. But there is no single reference to Reynolds in the work, while Bacon, Gibbon, Locke, and Bolingbroke are treated . . ." Now Mr. Jugaku's conclusion may be correct, but it does not follow from his evidence, for the hidden assumption of his syllogism—that Blake at once denounces in his own work every writer with whom he disagrees—is clearly far-fetched. For Blake, Reynolds was merely a particular image for Lockean thought and thus is subsumed under the "Bacon, Newton, Locke" triumvirate. In trying to show that many of the poems in the notebook are not first drafts but fair copies, Mr. Jugaku is undoubtedly correct, but his statement that Blake's assertion that he wrote *Milton* and *Jerusalem* automatically "must to a certain degree be accepted as it stands" is both vague and misleading. Do not sections of the *Four Zoas* reappear in these later works? Mr. Jugaku's major argument in behalf of a new dating of fragments of the *Everlasting Gospel* succeeds not in proving his own point—that parts of the poem were written "not earlier than 1809 though probably not much later"—but in casting reasonable doubt upon Keynes's argument for a considerably later date.

The *Bibliographical Study*, despite these minor difficulties and what is at times a rather jagged prose style, is a valuable work of Blake scholarship. Mr. Jugaku tells us that it is to form the first section of a trilogy on the notebook, to be followed by "aesthetical and doctrinal studies."

HAZARD ADAMS

Cornell University

*Glorious Incense: The Fulfillment of Edgar Allan Poe.* By HALDEEN BRADDY. Washington: Scarecrow Press, 1953. Pp. 234. \$4.50.

The two words making the title of this book come from language attributed to Poe by Mary Gove Nichols, in which he exclaimed how he doted on fame. The fulfillment of the subtitle has a twofold meaning: Poe's achievement in literature and the growth of his fame. The second of these supplies the method of the volume; it is a "literary survey of critical opinions," the preface states, during the century following Poe's death. The first two chapters, "Aim and Attainment" and "Theorist and Technician," deal with Poe's literary theories and his craftsmanship, but references in them are often to the recognition critics have given the qualities in his poems, stories, essays, and reviews. The third chapter, "Renown and Recognition," surveys Poe's vogue and his influence. The fourth and last chapter, "Fact and Fable," is concerned mainly with the fabrications and distortions—by Poe himself as well as by his detractors and his defenders—that have shaped the Poe legend.

In surveying a hundred years of writing on Poe, Mr. Braddy has mentioned a

vast number of authors and their books and articles, so that the text, the notes, and the bibliography taken together make up an analytical summary of Poe scholarship. Thus his book is a readily usable stock-taking of what is known and what has been concluded about Poe's life and work. He has singled out the main problems, furthermore, and for the most part has gone ahead to draw straightforward and sane conclusions from the evidence assembled. The evidence leaves him convinced that Poe's reading and his learning were greater than has generally been thought, that he was known more widely and more favorably among readers of his own time than is usually said, that his journalistic writing, even the purest hack-writing, merits attention. The chapter on Poe's renown and his influence is fullest in dealing with France, Spain, and Spanish America.

Mr. Braddy urges the kind of caution of which many Poe biographers have used too little in facing the temptation to interpolate biography into the skimpy records that exist, or to read the author directly from his poems and tales. With directness and objectivity Mr. Braddy has reasserted the worth of Poe's literary accomplishment; he has shown the extent of Poe's renown; and he has pursued a cautious and sane path through the maze created by a century of writing about Poe. He has succeeded amply in his purpose of writing a book that would be "useful as a digest, or a review, of the elements which have served to establish Poe at last among the immortals."

ARLIN TURNER

Duke University

*Kleine Schriften zur Literaturgeschichte des Mittelalters.* By WOLFGANG STAMMLER. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1953. Pp. viii + 269. DM 25.80; brosch. DM 23.60.

This collection of Stammller's smaller works—they are often not minor works in the normal sense of the term—must inevitably recall to any reader the author's enormous services to German scholarship and make him thankful for a life so full of accurate and enlightened research. Stammller's studies in the late medieval field set a standard in a difficult period of literature which will long remain a challenge and an inspiration to those who follow him.

The present collection consists of material reprinted from other sources and their dates range from 1918 ("Zum Fortleben des antiken Theaters im Mittelalter") to 1953 ("Deutsche Scholastik"). As might be expected when they are drawn from such various sources, they are of uneven value, and although note has been taken of more recent work in the printed versions, it would obviously be unfair to judge them in the light of present-day scholarship. It would be more pertinent to observe how often Stammller's earlier judgments remain valid and how frequently he has pioneered new lines of research.

This must surely be one of the very few collections of essays on medieval German literary topics which contains no work about the courtly romance or the *Minnesang*. Nor is there any speculation about the origins of the *Nibelungenlied* or the dialect of the *Hildebrandslied*. The stress is almost exclusively on the later Middle Ages and particularly on the prose of that period. The first part consists of various essays, of which the most interesting probably are "Von mittelalterlicher deutscher Prosa," "Die bürgerliche Dichtung des Mittelalters," and "Die Wurzeln des Meistersgesangs." (Why is it so hard to define *Meistersgesang*? Stammller and Archer Taylor, for example, seem scarcely to discuss the same subject.) The second part deals with "Deutsche Scholastik und Mystik"

and contains a most informative essay on Bible translations. The third section is composed entirely of articles on various aspects of Low German literature. Attention is concentrated throughout, as Stammller himself remarks, on the prose. Many of the essays display brilliant insight as well as remarkable scholarship and, with their superb bibliographical notes, would serve as admirable introductions to the study of their subjects. Inevitably, however, the discussion often verges on an *Ehrenrettung*. It is true that the prose of the later Middle Ages has been largely neglected by scholars, but it must also be observed that much of it deserves no better fate. The subject matter of these works is often of more interest to the theologian, the lawyer, and the cultural anthropologist than to the student of literature. As Stammller rightly remarks, a definite judgment is impossible when there are so few editions of German medieval prose works available, but his own observations, based on a unique knowledge of the material, confirm the impression that only the devoted student of the history of the development of a particular genre or prose style within the period would be likely to use them.

All the longer pieces in this collection reflect Stammller's attitude toward scholarship. They study the origins of a particular genre, the influences upon its development, the principal figures concerned in its production, and very often its social implications. This approach to study is very clearly the one that Stammller favors, for almost all the longer essays are carefully amassed collections of facts. It is unusual for Stammller to offer an opinion about the literary value of a work or even to attempt a reasoned differentiation between the various representative works within a particular genre.

We are thus easily able to understand his complaint about the shallowness of much modern research: "Und gerade die Jugend liebt nicht mehr die Mühe der dazu nötigen Vorbereitungen, das Erlernen der Paläographie, das Studium von Handschriften, das Lesen von mittellateinischen Schriften; lieber greift man zu den schon vorhandenen bequemen Texten und stellt zum hundertsten Male ein neues Walther- oder Wolfram-Bild hin, das nach ein paar Jahren vergessen ist."

This quotation largely sums up Stammller's attitude toward scholarship, and it is fortunate for less energetic men that he took this stand. Nevertheless, he poses here a fundamental problem: Is it really true that only the amassing of information and the production of texts constitutes true learning? One has every sympathy with his attitude toward much that passes for scholarship, the mere reshuffling of existing knowledge combined with a few personal observations, a warmed-over dish with a little not very piquant sauce. It is also true, however, that our knowledge of the Middle Ages has changed and widened so much in Stammller's own lifetime that reevaluation of the great works of the *Blütezeit* is essential, and it is precisely these works which are worthy of the kind of research which persons of Stammller's ability can offer. For it becomes more and more clear that they cannot be interpreted without an immense knowledge of other branches of medieval learning, and the production of a new—really new—picture of Walther and of Wolfram is surely of more importance than the production of the texts of minor authors whom few people have the time or patience to read. Nothing in this statement challenges Stammller's demand for deep knowledge and wide reading. The individual productions of medieval culture and learning can be understood only with reference to the whole.

W. T. H. JACKSON

Columbia University

*Alt- und mittenglische Anthologie.* By ROLF KAISER. Berlin: published privately by the author, Berlin-Wilmersdorf, Markobrunner Str. 21, 1954. Pp. xxxii + 474. DM 7.80.

This remarkably comprehensive group of selections from Old and Middle English literature represents a peculiarly touching labor of love, published privately by its author in order to give the poor student a decent chance to have a text of his own. The author himself, a private lecturer at the Free University of Berlin, has sacrificed his meagre means, as well as his precious time, to bring out a text which he hopes will attract friends to this great body of literature. In so doing he has achieved highly creditable success. The handling of the texts is masterful, notably free from errors, and the price of the volume (\$1.90) is a bargain by any standard.

According to the author, the texts are intended to be extensive enough to serve as adequate source material for both literary and linguistic studies. Beowulf (along with the Finnsburg Fragment) and the writings of Chaucer have been omitted, since they are easily available in other inexpensive editions. The author follows the form of the manuscripts as nearly as possible, although he edits a few beginning texts, e.g., with long-marks, for the benefit of the neophyte. Each selection is preceded by a few brief references to manuscripts, bibliography, and handbooks, and necessary emendations are clarified in the footnotes. While the material is in rough chronological order, it is grouped as much as possible according to subject matter rather than dialects. A series of plates give interesting illustrations of manuscript style, and two maps are added to depict the geographical distribution of Old and Middle English texts, respectively.

A second volume is being readied for press. In it are to appear sections on aids to grammar, sources, variant readings, notes, detailed bibliographies, and a glossary. If it were possible to have this subsequent volume in English as well as German, the result would be a solid set of highly useful texts for students in America as well as in Germany. While this may pass as a sad commentary on contemporary scholarship, my experience with graduate students both here and in Germany reveals an unwillingness among them to study strange texts with foreign-language notes and glossaries. Nevertheless, I consider it most interesting that the enthusiasm and competence of the German student in dealing with older English literature frequently surpasses that of native English speakers, and it may well be the inspiring devotion of such teachers as Professor Kaiser which is responsible. At any rate, his noble effort should be greeted with applause from Anglistics everywhere.

CARROLL E. REED

*University of Washington*

*Rhythmen und Landschaften in zweiten Teil des Faust.* By PAUL FRIEDELAENDER. Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1953. Pp. vi + 114. DM 6.—.

As the title indicates somewhat obscurely, this small volume does not attempt to deal with the whole of *Faust II*. Neither is it a complete discussion of the metrics and scenes of this work. Actually the first thirty pages deal almost entirely with the first scene while the last twenty-nine pages are devoted to the last scene of *Faust II*. Particularly these chapters are well done and give a fine overview and critical analysis, e.g., the Shakespeare-Ariel and Dante-terza-rima duality of the first scene. The last chapter goes even more deeply into the

function of the rhythms and their parallelism with other *passus* in the drama, although many will object to the space given to such matters as purely superficial ritual form (pp. 96 ff.).

The intervening chapters are in the nature of "news and notes" about the phorkyads, the Alexandrines in the enfiefment scene, the function of the Greek trimeters, the Arcadian interlude, the pantheistic beginning of Homunculus, and end of the choretids. Particularly this latter question fails to satisfy me here and in other recent articles and commentaries, and Friedländer especially makes much ado about little when he raises the question: "Aber ist wirklich Helenas Schicksal, mythischer Schatten im Reiche der Schatten zu sein, beneidenswerter als das der Mädchen des Chores?" This brings us no closer to an understanding either of what Goethe had in mind or of what the poem actually says.

In general, the reader will not find too much in this book that he does not know already, but Dr. Friedländer has in the main woven his materials so skillfully that much previous research is combined with his own ideas into a very readable work.

CURTIS C. D. VAIL

*University of Washington*

*Réalité sociale et idéologie religieuse dans les romans de Thomas Mann.* By PIERRE-PAUL SAGAVE. Paris: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, Société d'Edition, Les Belles Lettres, fascicule 124, 1954. Pp. 168.

M. Sagave's study is an unusually interesting and valuable contribution. Confining himself to *Buddenbrooks*, *Der Zauberberg*, and *Doktor Faustus*, he attempts, with general success, to depict both the political and economic reality underlying the three novels and the ideological forces which helped to shape them. *Joseph und seine Brüder* is excluded because of its "mythological essence"; yet there is after all enough consideration, veiled though it is, of contemporary social conditions and ideas in the tetralogy to make one wish that Sagave had decided to deal with it.

The discussion of *Buddenbrooks* is mainly valuable for its account of the decline of Lübeck as a commercial center, based on various political and economic histories of the city. Readers devoted solely to the intrinsic approach may object that this "has nothing to do with literature." Yet one cannot make meaningful judgments of Mann's rank as a realist without some independent knowledge of the "reality" he describes. This Sagave gives us, and we should be grateful.

The treatment of *Der Zauberberg* is skillfully focused on Naphta's personality. (Settembrini is treated as very much of a dolt, a procedure which seems to me deplorably simplistic.) Naphta's Marxist, Catholic, and terrorist aspects are adequately illuminated. There is a very brief section on "romantic influences"—Sagave does not seem to know Käte Hamburger's important work—and a succinct account of Jewish types in Mann's fiction. Sagave well stresses the profoundly Hegelian character of the novel.

The "single great ideological theme" of *Doktor Faustus*, we are told, is "the dialectic of liberty." Not everyone would agree, but certainly Sagave's point of view has afforded him some interesting insights. As one might expect, he places great stress on Luther, who becomes as it were the villain of the novel, and of

recent German history as well. Luther's combination of an ideal of "inner" freedom with political subservience to the temporal powers stands, in Sagave's view, at the beginning of a development which led the "non-political" German middle class to destruction. Yet Sagave seems not fully to have sensed the depth of despair expressed in the novel. Thus he states that one of Mann's essays on Goethe—presumably the "Phantasie" is meant—furnishes to some extent a consoling ending to *Doktor Faustus* (p. 91). The "lesson" of the book, he holds, is that Germany can be saved only if "Christian freedom can be transformed into civic freedom" (p. 127) and nationalism modified by universalism.

A short conclusion complements and in part corrects this curiously narrow interpretation of Mann's intention. It also well sums up his career as a "series of emancipations." While some of Sagave's emphases are arbitrary, his book is enlightening and vivid; it offers numerous keen observations and occasional flashes of wit. Unfortunately, the bibliography is inadequate—not even Weigand's contributions are noted—and the lack of an index is irritating. "Doch endet nicht mit Fluch der Sang": this is one of the better studies of Mann's work.

HENRY HATFIELD

Harvard University

*Diderot and Descartes: A Study of Scientific Naturalism in the Enlightenment.*  
By ARAM VARTANIAN. Princeton: Princeton University History of Ideas  
Series, No. 6, 1953. Pp. vi + 336. \$6.00.

I suggest that a more accurate title for this very important book would be *From Descartes to Diderot*, since its contribution is not principally in the form of a direct comparison, nor is it a new interpretation of the thought of either of these philosophers. It has long been known that Descartes' system gave rise to mechanist and materialistic philosophies, and that the thinking of the philosophes retained the imprint of his method and outlook.<sup>1</sup> What Dr. Vartanian has done, and done brilliantly, is to bring out the exact nature, terms, and extent of Descartes' influence, and, most important, to trace step by step, in the works of many writers between 1680 and 1755, the development and transformation of Cartesian mechanism into eighteenth-century materialism.

Dr. Vartanian demonstrates how the Cartesian physics was stripped of dualist metaphysics and apologetics; how its central idea—that matter and its inherent modes of behavior have brought about all things according to necessary mechanical law—led inevitably to the discarding of Providence and intelligent final causes, and to a consequent naturalism. For this Descartes had himself cleared the path by treating nature apart from theology. Gassendism had failed to form a scientific school; its materialist Epicureanism, containing certain elements lacking in Cartesianism, was absorbed into the more vigorous stream. Gassendism and Newtonianism both failed by attributing development to intelligent, rather than to mechanical, causes. The metaphysical question as to the origin of motion was either brushed aside by the neo-Cartesians as irrelevant or solved by adding motion to the definition of matter. Further, the Cartesian cosmogony, like Newton's, envisaged the universe as a machine, but as a machine in a continuous developmental process of destruction and creation. God, as Voltaire noted, also

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Vartanian is apparently unaware of Lanson's article, "L'Influence de la philosophie cartésienne sur la littérature française," which as early as 1896 anticipated clearly some of his general conclusions, and even some of his findings of detail.

became irrelevant. Consequently, it was necessary to account for the formation of the world and its contents, not merely for its operations. We see this shift from Newtonianism to Cartesianism in Diderot's writings between 1746 and 1749. The origins of Diderot's thought in La Mettrie, Buffon, and various minor writers, and their adherence to the Cartesian outlook, is carefully gone into.

The materialist influence of Descartes' physics was seconded by his methodology, with its reliance on clear ideas, a priori deductive thinking, the free use of hypotheses and the imagination. Again the Cartesian-Newtonian polarity is traced in detail. The methodological conflict overlay a deeper one of outlook. The Cartesian view was that nature is "a single, wholly interlocking entity," therefore to be explained by one set of fundamental principles. It held that science must be constructed in the form of an unbroken chain of deductions, whereas Newton was content to calculate a number of discrete laws explanatory of diverse phenomena, admitting a multiplicity of primary principles. The mathematicism of Newton was similarly incapable of interpreting natural phenomena in their variability and dynamic evolution, or of presenting nature as a whole. Mathematics was therefore assailed, not in the interests of experimentalism, but as being true only to its own definitions and having no objective existence.

If all comes from matter in motion, then man, too, must be fitted into the embracing pattern of nature. This the materialists accomplished by explaining the origin of life in mechanical terms, by developing theories of transformism, and applying to man himself the Cartesian mechanistic biology. In this phase of their work, the naturalists were aided by biological and geological discoveries in the 1740's, but the deeper roots were in Descartes; by themselves, the chain-of-being hypothesis and the biological discoveries would not have yielded a coherent theory of man and nature. Instead, the doctrine was developed that Nature is neither God nor chance, but a creative force containing its finalities in its own laws. The concluding section of the book presents an evaluation of the contributions of Gassendi, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, the Epicurean tradition, La Mettrie, Buffon, d'Holbach, Maupertuis, and Montaigne to eighteenth-century intellectual history, and of Diderot's position in regard to materialism, especially with reference to its ethical connotations.

A brief summary such as this cannot do justice to the cogent historical exposition, the lucid reasoning, and the wealth of evidence that are the outstanding features of Dr. Vartanian's work. Here or there one has a doubt or a question; some of these follow.

Leaving aside what later generations did to him, in Descartes' own mind physics and metaphysics were probably more tightly joined than they are here considered (the conservation of movement, for instance, is based on the immutability of God); and physics cannot be considered the end-all of his thought. Man for him cannot be explained by matter and movement, but embodies a final cause due to God's Providence. His ethics and concept of man did not result mainly from his scientific ideas on the body-machine. The idea that the *cogito* did not involve the spirituality of thought as a substance would probably have been surprising to Descartes.

Was it because of Descartes that the investigator of nature became the guide to morals? As we can see in the *Lettre sur les aveugles*, the new moral concepts are a result of Lockean sensationalism at least as much as of the man-machine. Similarly, it seems somewhat exaggerated to attribute to Descartes the origin of the dialogue form. In explaining why the philosophes denied the paternity of

Descartes, the reason given—that they would have had to compete with official Cartesianism—is not very convincing.<sup>2</sup> A more likely explanation is their aversion to metaphysical systems, and the fact that they rejected so much of his philosophy that they did not feel the weight of their debt; he was never their idol. Considering Descartes' dualism, his metaphysical approach to reality, his concept of man, his psychology and theory of knowledge, it is not surprising that Diderot felt himself to be a son of the empiricists. We see this in Diderot's (and Buffon's) criticism of mathematics, which is not made in favor of the Cartesian method, but in favor of observation and experimentation.<sup>3</sup> This applies also to his criticism of "occult qualities" in Newton. Consequently, the opinion that the philosophes unquestioningly placed their trust in Descartes' methodology seems exaggerated. Although it is true that Diderot, in the *Pensées sur l'Interprétation de la nature*, did not follow Bacon as far as he thought, *Pensées* VI-X, XV, XX, XXI, XXII, XLVIII, etc., evince opposition to the Cartesian method in favor of the Baconian. In *Pensée* XLV, where Diderot suggests the ultimate reduction of natural forces to one basic principle, he clearly sets forth that this is to be done by the experimental and inductive method. (Dr. Vartanian seems unwittingly to admit this on p. 160, and in the quotation on pp. 166-67.) He did not actually hold that it was wrong to frame different principles for different phenomena, but, since he believed in the interdependence of physical events, the next step was to find the higher unitary principle that underlay these laws.

In assessing the contributions of others, Dr. Vartanian strives hard to be fair, but one feels a tendency to minimize them. We must not forget that the important idea of uniting matter and motion is to be found in Hobbes. Epicurean materialism not only conceived a world derived from matter in motion, but held this motion to be inherent to matter, and also reduced mind to matter. Its doctrines included conservation of energy, continuous construction and destruction of forms, an evolutionary theory that embraced both the physical and the biological universe (the parallel between the "monsters" of Diderot and those of Lucretius is self-evident). Its psychology was sensationalist, its ethics, like that of the philosophes, based on a pleasure theory deduced from physical sensitivity. Dr. Vartanian argues that Epicureanism was tainted with the doctrine of Chance. Aside from the fact that Democritus rejected Chance, what the later doctrine embodied was rather the idea of inherent spontaneity, which seems not unrelated to the philosophes' "demiurgic force."

For that matter, Bacon had already said, "Chance is the name of a thing that does not exist." Bacon had also condemned looking at isolated facts and insisted on considering the unity of nature. Science, he maintained, needs philosophy to coördinate its purposes and results. In regard to hypotheses, Diderot went much further than Bacon would have allowed, but so did Bacon himself. In the human sphere as well, Bacon was closer to Diderot in rejecting the will as a distinct faculty and in demanding a strict study of cause and effect in human action. As

<sup>2</sup> At any rate, it is difficult to understand why it was more "discreet" to ascribe their doctrines to Epicurus than to Descartes.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Vartanian avers that in rejecting the objective validity of mathematics Diderot committed himself to innatism and abandoned the experimental method. I wonder whether there is not some uncertainty here in the use of the word "innate." For Descartes, who was not interested in the origin of ideas, innateness meant immediate certainty. Locke's attack was not directed against this concept of Descartes', but rather against the genetic innatism of the Cambridge neo-Platonists. It should be noted, then, that Locke also considered mathematics as "intuitive" knowledge and held its truth to be one of coherence rather than correspondence.

for Locke, it is too much to say that his sensationalism could not terminate in materialism. In fact, Dr. Vartanian's own summary of Locke's contribution (p. 299) seems to recognize this. While one aspect of his thought led to idealism, another led to materialism—exactly as with Descartes. If knowledge and ideation derive from sensation, as Locke held, then philosophy must be based on physiology and medicine; the study of the mind becomes the study of the body. This is obvious in the *Lettre sur les aveugles*. Descartes had described the psychic life of animals as a mechanical process. Locke provided the bridge to the consideration of thought as a physical process and man as animal. Locke himself had said that it was impossible to prove the spiritual nature of the soul and that matter might think. To Locke is also due in large measure the liberation from religious orientation in the study of man. In method, moreover, Locke favored the use of hypotheses, much as Diderot did.

In considering Newton, we must not forget that his science was entirely detached from metaphysics (unlike Descartes'), and if he added apologetic and teleological considerations, so had the French philosopher. Roger Cotes, whom Dr. Vartanian quotes, accused Descartes of dealing with "occult motions" and "occult fluids," while Newton himself rejects "occult qualities" in the *Optiks*. Although Newton's theory is mathematical, he expresses the belief, in the preface to the *Principia*, that all nature can be explained by mechanical principles (matter and motion); he upholds the unity of nature and the eventual reduction of multiple principles to some more basic unity. Like Locke's system and Descartes', Newton's, though often teleologically interpreted (following his own example), also gave rise to a mechanistic view of nature, if not to an evolutionary view. When it is said that Bacon's and Newton's ideas were antagonistic to the general ends of scientific naturalism, we must not forget that one of its chief ends was human progress through experimental science, and that Descartes' physics was sterile since it could not be applied to predict specific events. As for Buffon, Lanson demonstrates convincingly that he favored and used a non-Cartesian, empirical method (as some of Dr. Vartanian's own quotations tend to show)—although it is equally true that he by no means limited himself to it.

Mrs. Rosenfeld has shown that it was the empiricists, in their opposition to automatism, who effaced the distinction between man and animal. On reading the *Lettre sur les aveugles*, one feels closer to Lucretius than to Descartes; and the later completion of the theory by the addition of *sensibilité* to matter stemmed from experiment. Dr. Vartanian shows how experimental discoveries were crucial and determining. The doctrine of transformism was revitalized by experimentation to a greater extent perhaps than he allows; he passes by Daubenton's discoveries in comparative anatomy, inserted in the fourth volume of Buffon's *Histoire naturelle*. Were it not, then, for all the others, for a new attitude toward science and nature and a new feeling of progress aroused by experimental science, it is hard to see how the materialistic naturalism implicit in Descartes' physics would ever have undergone the developments that are here exposed so decisively, developments that far surpassed Descartes' own mechanism. Without minimizing the tremendous role actually played by Descartes, one can speculate that Cartesianism alone would have been relatively impotent outside of philosophy, whereas naturalism and materialism would have arisen anyhow, doubtless with some differences, from a combination of all the historical influences and inexorable march of science from Kepler and Galileo to the eighteenth-century biologists.

It would be better to avoid the words "creative" and "emergence" in describing the concept of Nature as self-determining. Descartes had confined the un-

folding of Nature to matter, excluding the rational faculties; Diderot *et al.* also explained mind as matter, thereby reducing the problem to one of simple causation, a determinable process excluding emergence or creation. Herein lies the chief philosophical problem of materialism, and at the end Diderot may have become aware of emergents not reducible to strict causation. In this regard, it seems to me that neither Dr. Vartanian nor Diderot has explained the latter's doctrine of *sensibilité* as mechanical ("a comfortable position" is scarcely a notion of mechanics).

Dr. Vartanian concludes his study with some remarks on Diderot's materialism. His setting off of Locke-Helvétius against Descartes-Diderot on the question of the determinism of organization evokes certain comments. While it is reasonably sure that Helvétius developed Locke in the way suggested, we may recall that it was Descartes who first held men to be equal in reason, deficient only in method, while Bacon, in his "Idols of the Cave," recognized the importance of differences in organization. Diderot rejected Helvétius partly because of his absurd exaggeration of Lockean sensationalism, but he did not reject Lockean psychology. However, that was not all. We remember that Diderot also rejected La Mettrie who, like himself, believed in the determinism of organization. He rejected them both for common reasons, which he states unequivocally, and which are not the reasons given here.

It is always dangerous to isolate one aspect of Diderot's thought from the complex, interacting whole, and in this case his ethical concepts revealed to him the inadequacy of the reduction of man to mechanical organization. While the polyp may well have shown that the "soul" was as infinitely divisible as matter (p. 255), Diderot knew that an organism had a "soul" distinct from its mere parts, its own purposiveness in behavior directed toward ends; and that this in intelligent beings became creation of ends, so that antecedent cause, whether external or inner, did not define the human. The contradiction was in part between Diderot's materialism and the final conclusions of his ethics. Dr. Vartanian struggles to escape it by trying to dissociate Diderot's materialism from his ethics and by making natural determinism a prelude to moral freedom (neither of which Diderot did) by restating the problem in twentieth-century terms and avoiding the difficulty of man's exceptional status in a deterministic world of mechanism and matter. The contradiction is also within the ethics, between the part that ensued from his materialism and the part that flowed from his humanism. For it was not typical of naturalism to be concerned only with the investigation of the physical world; the application to ethics was an essential phase. While freedom does require fixed law, as Dr. Vartanian states well, we must not forget that Diderot long confused freedom and arbitrariness of behavior, and that freedom is itself the surpassing of law as Diderot understood it, i.e., of cause-effect, the past determining the future. It is similarly deceptive to conclude by saying that Diderot sought to demonstrate the fundamental harmony between what lies outside of man and what lies within him; "harmony" does not mean "equivalence" or "limited to," and Diderot ended by demanding causes peculiar to man.

In presentation, the book has one peculiarity. French quotations are translated into English in the text, but not in the footnotes; on the other hand, all Latin quotations are left in the original (on the assumption that Latin is more familiar to scholars?). However Dr. Vartanian himself writes *a fortiori* for *a fortiori* (p. 259). The index is scanty and careless. There is one misprint: "Gomez" for "Gómez" (p. 232).

I wish to emphasize that the above criticisms involve matters of degree, or de-

tails, or extraneous conclusions. I should like to suggest that eighteenth-century materialism grew out of such a complex of interacting influences, that it seems unwise to take a single man and attribute the shape of ideological development largely to him, even though his imprint is clear in the rationale and method of much of eighteenth-century thought. It remains that Dr. Vartanian has restored Descartes' importance, thrown new light on the intellectual history of the Enlightenment, and written a study of enduring value.

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